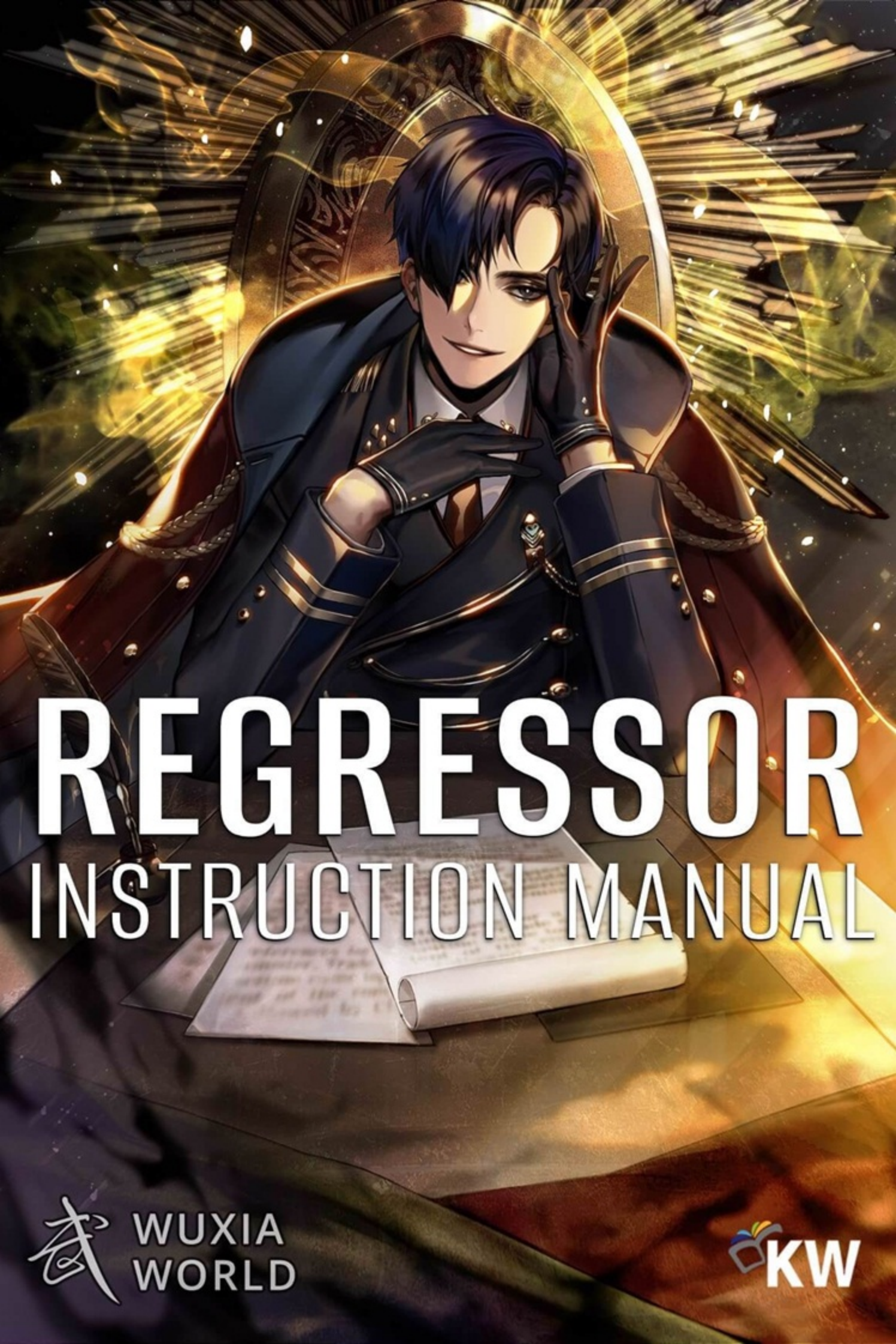
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
KW

REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 5 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 200
LEE KI-YOUNG'S HIDDEN CAMERA PRANK (1)

I thought Park Deok-Gu was desperate more than anyone, but it wasn't the case. Seeing him continuously train showed just how cornered he was, and despite that, I couldn't understand why he wouldn't accept the serum. However, I assumed he had his reasons. It could be a ridiculous reason like he was trying to repay me for my trust or that he wanted to stand next to me with his efforts alone, but helping him grow even just a little bit was more important than him training like this.

'It's because he's an idiot.'

Since he couldn't self-diagnose, he didn't even know what his problems were, so of course, he was frustrated. In the first place, putting geniuses like Kim Ye-Ri, Kim Hyun-Sung, and Jo Hye-Jin on the same level as himself was his mistake, and Kim Ye-Ri was right. Park Deok-Gu had his own role to fulfill, and even if he accepted this serum, he wouldn't be able to catch up to the geniuses in Kim Hyun-Sung's party.

I was in the same situation as him. When I first realized that I wouldn't be able to catch up to the geniuses, I changed my course. Even if my magic was influential and I could increase it with my tenacity, it would still be impossible for me to catch up to people like Jung Ha-Yan. Even if I trained for a thousand years, I knew very well that I wouldn't reach Jung Ha-Yan's level with my talent. Of course, Park Deok-Gu had a chance to catch up since he wasn't lazy like me.

"So, this was the solution you came up with?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"That's right," I replied.

"It doesn't sound like a bad idea, but… you said this could really mess up a person if it doesn't work out? I did see Park Deok-Gu quite a lot during the tutorial dungeon, but his mind didn't seem that strong. He actually seemed dependent and… honestly…"

"What?" I asked.

“To be honest, that man would have died in the tutorial dungeon if it wasn’t for you, Ki-Young oppa,” she continued.

Park Deok-Gu would have been sad if he had heard that, and Lee Ji-Hye had said it like it was nothing. Her work at the Black Swan Guild must have been kind of difficult for her, as she looked exhausted, but her confidence and relaxed attitude were still there.

“That’s not something you should be saying, Ji-Hye noona.” I pointed out.

“*Hm,* you think so? I think I would’ve survived somehow even without you and Mr. Hyun-Sung. It’s all in the past anyway, so let’s stop talking about it because that’s not what’s important right now. Also, why do you keep calling me noona, Oppa?” she asked.

[Checking Player Lee Ji-Hye’s Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Lee Ji-Hye]

[Title - The Brain of the Black Swan Guild]

[Age - 29]

[Nature - Selfish and ambitious person]

[Job - Leader]

[Stats]

[Strength - 16/Below average growth limit]

[Agility - 15/Below average growth limit]

[Stamina - 27/Below average growth limit]

[Intelligence - 67/Above rare growth limit]

[Endurance - 14/Below average growth limit]

[Luck - 44/Below average growth limit]

[Magic - 13/Below average growth limit]

[Overall Review - It has been a while since I've seen your soulmate. As I've mentioned before, I hope you don't get too close to her. You already know that I'll feel bad for your baby, right?]

'That's because you're older than me.'

I guess she didn't know that I could check other people's age. It was a secret only I wanted to know, so I quietly looked away while brooding over the baby the overall review had mentioned.

"I don't think I look that old, but… it's still interesting," she remarked.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I didn't think you cared about him this much. I thought you were more cold-hearted… Or, is it hard to cut him off because you guys had been together from the beginning?" she asked.

"Something like that," I replied.

"That's surprising. I knew you always cared about Mr. Hyun-Sung, but it seems like you've been taking great care of that big man this time. If it weren't for that news about how you were with Kasugano Yuno in the imperial castle, I would've been suspicious about whether you were gay or not," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"What?" I asked.

"I'm joking. I know better than anyone that you're not that type of person. But if you do like men better than women, then make sure to drop me a hint. Giving me a challenge is fine, but if that's really true, then it'll be pretty sad for me, don't you think?"

"It's nothing like that," I told her.

“I know. I just said it because it seemed like you cared for Mr. Deok-Gu that much. There isn’t a reason for you to keep him around, and yet, I can see that you’re trying to protect him. You know the other guilds and parties have been talking about it, right?” Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

“I don’t. I’ve been pretty busy recently because of my research. Is there a bad rumor going around or something?” I asked her.

“Something like that. There’s a rumor that Kim Hyun-Sung and Lee Ki-Young of the Eight Seats might recruit a useful vanguard for the Blue Guild’s party,” she answered.

“It’s not true…”

“It may not sound like a false rumor to those who can’t keep their mouths shut because even outsiders can notice a lot of things. It’s undeniable that Mr. Deok-Gu can’t catch up with that party, and giving him the role of Blue Guild’s vanguard will result in a lot of issues. The rumors about recruiting a competent vanguard have made those who want to transfer move in strange ways. Even the freelance tanks are excited that maybe they’ll get a call from the Blue Guild…” she explained.

“…”

“I understand how you’re feeling, but you need to consider cutting people out to succeed. Well, I’m sure you can handle it on your own… I don’t think I’m in a position where I can judge the situation. Just think of me as chattering away, as I’m worried for my husband,” she added.

“No, you’re right about some things…” I started.

“You think so?” she asked.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung has actually suggested that we form a second party. He believed that rather than abandoning Deok-Gu, transferring him to the second party would be better since he might be in danger if we enter places more dangerous than we have entered in the past. I think Mr. Hyun-Sung’s actually thinking about recruiting another tank or training someone to become a tank…” I continued.

“That’s unfortunate for Mr. Deok-Gu. If he’s thinking about training someone, is he thinking about recruiting someone from the tutorial dungeon?” she asked.

“Probably. Even though Lee Sang-Hee has retired, she’s still the Blue Guild’s advisor, so it’s not an urgent matter, but they do need to prepare for it. This is going to be the last time I’m going to help Park Deok-Gu out. Do you understand?” I asked.

“I do…” she answered.

“I spent a lot of time and resources trying to create the Enhancement Serum, and I’ve become too busy to take care of him like this. Not only is it because of my position, but I have a lot of work aside from the tasks at the guild. The Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild aren’t the only ones that consider the new recruits as important,” I added.

“I get it. Now that the Blue Guild has somewhat settled down, I’m sure you guys want to recruit a lot of new and competent members. I understand that…” she said.

“This is the first and the last time. If I don’t see any results or nothing changes about him…”

“Are you going to kick him out of the guild?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“No way. I’ll probably move him to the second party. We can make him an instructor or place him in the administration office,” I replied.

“I knew you cared a lot for him,” she said.

“I’ll take that as a compliment, noona.”

Lee Ji-Hye smiled as if she was really enjoying the situation. The way she looked at me made me feel kind of uncomfortable, but since she had promised to help, I had basically completed my goal.

“Thanks for helping me despite being busy, noona,” I thanked her.

“I’ll think of it as purchasing a few stocks. I’m sure I’ll get something in return later,” she said.

“The Black Swan Guild should receive some benefits soon,” I mentioned.

“I’m sure Yeon-Joo unnie will like it. *Oh*. Ask Mr. Hyun-Sung to make some time for our guild master. She has been asking him to meet with her, but he hasn’t replied

yet," she requested.

"Miss Park Yeon-Joo did?" I asked.

"Yeah. Have you heard anything from him?" she asked.

"I haven't heard anything…"

"I think our unnie has the hots for Mr. Hyun-Sung. She has been asking me nonstop to create an opportunity where they can meet. I'm asking out of curiosity, but… he's not a eunuch, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I don't… think so…" I mumbled.

I thought that Kim Hyun-Sung had a good relationship with Jo Hye-Jin, so this was news to me. Who knew he would be involved in a strange dating rumor with the guild master of the Black Swan Guild? Obviously, this would help the Blue Guild. However, the fact that I had no idea about it meant that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't care, but still…

'This is good news.'

I never imagined that I would hear something like this.

"I guess he's been busy with research recently. There hasn't been any official activity yet, but it's a rumor that has been going around, just like the rumor related to Mr. Deok-Gu…" she mentioned.

"What kind of rumor?" I asked.

"There's a rumor that the only reason the Blue Guild was able to climb up to their current position was because of the guild master and the sub guild master's experience with women. I don't know about Kim Hyun-Sung, but the rumors totally fit you, Lee Ki-Young. It's quite interesting. You're definitely charming, but I wonder what it is about you that makes women stick to you like a magnet…" she explained.

There was a really sad story behind it, but I didn't bother explaining it. However, hearing Lee Ji-Hye talk like this made me think that I really did spend a lot of time on my research. I couldn't help but be curious about whether there were other rumors or not.

“Are there other rumors besides those that I haven’t heard of?” I asked.

“I’m not sure. I heard the Red Mercenary Guild betting on the survival of the rookies during this tutorial dungeon. You know the Mercenary Queen hasn’t made an official appearance, right? I think there’s a different reason, but it seems that the public is thinking that way,” she answered.

‘That’s right.’

“What else? There’s a rumor that the Eight Seats are going to be announced to the public soon, and I think the Holy Empire was the one that spread the rumor. I guess it can be considered as an official announcement rather than just a rumor,” she added.

“Great. I did think that there was going to be an official announcement… and the timing is great. Probably…” I mumbled.

“Probably after the tutorial dungeon opens. *Oh!* There’s also a rumor about Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild getting engaged to Lady Marilyn and that he might take over Castle Rock—”

“That’s a false rumor,” I interrupted her.

“I knew it because Lady Marilyn was the one who spread that rumor,” Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

“You sure know a lot,” I said in a low voice.

“It’s not an exaggeration to say that the Black Swan Guild’s intel is the best in the empire. Also, did you know?” she asked.

“About what?” I asked.

“About that girl named Kim Ye-Ri in your guild,” she started.

“What about her?” I asked.

“She recently became close with one of our guild members,” she continued.

“I don’t know much about her. Mr. Hyun-Sung is the one who’s taking care of her…” I

informed her.

“It’s best to tell her to stop visiting the Black Swan Guild so often,” she advised.

“Did she cause trouble or something?” I questioned.

“No, it’s nothing like that. The member that Ye-Ri is close to is my subordinate, and she’s not exactly the most innocent kid. She doesn’t do anything bad, but she’s like the other kids these days. I’m just worried that we’re going to be a bad influence on her rather than her damaging the Black Swan Guild. We’re actually struggling to keep that kid under control…” she explained.

“Is she a psychopath or something?” I asked.

“No, she’s a nice girl. She’s talented, skillful, and she’s competent enough to be a member that will lead the future of the Black Swan Guild,” Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“In that case, you don’t have to worry so much. It’s actually better. It’ll look nice politically if the Blue Guild and the Black Swan Guild get along in the future, and if you think of it as them making friends, it’s more likely that they’ll be influenced positively. The kid in our guild has always been a loner, so I’m relieved to hear that she managed to make a friend, and I’m sure Mr. Hyun-Sung will be happy about that, too. Don’t worry too much,” I assured her.

When I gave her an ordinary answer, Lee Ji-Hye shouted someone’s name.

“Shi-Ra? Chae Shi-Ra!”

Not long after Lee Ji-Hye, I immediately heard an answer from them.

“You called for me because you needed me, right, unnie? Right? Right. The fact that Ji-Hye unnie called for me while meeting with Lee Ki-Young oppa, a nominee of the Eight Seats, means that you’ve acknowledged me! Awesome. I might just wet my pants. You called for me on this quiet, quiet, quiet night! I’m worried that you might suggest that the three of us should play together, but I’m excited. Rawr!” Chae Shi-Ra babbled.

“No, there’s no need for you to come in,” Lee Ji-Hye told her.

“…”

I heard the woman's loud voice outside the door. Even though I couldn't see her face, the thought that maybe I should do my best to stop Kim Ye-Ri from visiting the Black Swan Guild popped into my head.

"I understand what you're saying… I'll try my best to stop her," I told Lee Ji-Hye.

"Alright. Anyway, you're going to enter the dungeon soon, right? I'll prepare everything that you ordered, so don't worry. I'll make sure everything goes according to your plan," she assured me.

"Thanks, noona."

"It's nothing. We're… anyway, good luck. That big man was a nice guy, so I hope he gets good results this time," she added.

"Really?" I asked.

"Of course. It's natural for a person in power to have one or two loyal subordinates, right? I won't see you out, my love," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"See you later, my best friend," I said in return.

The die had already been cast. The First Park Deok-Gu Awakening and Strengthening Plan. Entering a dungeon with him was the first thing I had to do, and my plan to turn him into Captain Lindel would come afterward. However, before that…

'I have to warn Hyun-Sung.'

I couldn't let the future of the Blue Guild grow like that.

CHAPTER 201
LEE KI-YOUNG'S HIDDEN CAMERA PRANK (2)

"Are you really okay?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Of course. I don't know when we'll meet like this again, and if I keep missing out, the times we'll spend together like this will only go down. I'll be busy once the recruits arrive, and since Mr. Hyun-Sung understands that too, he allowed me to join this dungeon expedition," I explained to him.

"But…"

"I also want to get some fresh air. Let's think of it as a long overdue trip since we haven't had any free time recently. People need to have breaks, you know," I added.

"Hyung-nim…" Park Deok-Gu muttered.

For some reason, Park Deok-Gu looked at me as if he was thankful. He was probably thinking that this dungeon expedition had been planned out just for him, so of course, he would react that way. Anyone could tell that going on an unexpected dungeon expedition at a time like this was just *too* random.

It had only been a few days since our argument, so he probably thought that this unexpected dungeon expedition was conducted as a way of apologizing to him for what had happened. Jung Ha-Yan was still acting uncomfortable around him, and before we started talking about this expedition, I didn't talk to Park Deok-Gu even once. On the outside, this looked like an expedition of reconciliation to restore the relationship that had been temporarily broken.

'That's right.'

Anyone would think the same about this expedition. I was sure he had never imagined that this plan would be totally different from what he had expected.

The First Park Deok-Gu Awakening and Strengthening Plan. Director Lee Ki-Young, script Lee Ki-Young, and assistant Lee Ji-Hye.

This was the real present I had prepared for the guy who cried after he got destroyed by Kim Ye-Ri. Actually, it was a bit cruel to call it a present, but it was a solution to help him get what he wanted. He was lacking in many things, but his biggest issue right now was…

'His fourth job.'

He was the only person in the party who hadn't gotten a fourth job, and he was still on his rare-ranked job. I assumed he had obtained a lot of experience during the monster wave, so I didn't really know why he still hadn't unlocked his fourth job. I had no choice but to think that there was a psychological barrier preventing him from unlocking it. He was actually experiencing a slight mental health problem, which made him unable to clearly see the solution. However, there was one thing I was curious about.

'When he's in danger… '

How would Park Deok-Gu react? It was probably a useless deduction, but it was worth thinking about. He had never experienced a crisis. Kim Hyun-Sung's party was a special party composed of geniuses, so even if Park Deok-Gu didn't do his part, a special being named Kim Hyun-Sung would always solve all the problems, and it wasn't just Kim Hyun-Sung. Jung Ha-Yan's protection magic protected the rearguards first before Park Deok-Gu could and whenever the members were in danger, the geniuses would pop out from somewhere and save him. Even at the Cursed Shrine where we fought Juliena, Kim Hyun-Sung was the one who took Juliena down, a monster above epic rank, all by himself, and during the monster wave, Park Deok-Gu didn't really do anything outstanding. Basically, he was just blending in with the party.

'Despite the fact that he managed to rack up so much experience points… '

What if the system itself wasn't recognizing it? What if the system couldn't determine what job to give him? These were just my assumptions, but I believed experimenting on them had merit. Too many things were bothering me that it was impossible to overlook.

It didn't matter if he hadn't unlocked a new job or an attribute. If Park Deok-Gu realized that he was lacking through this expedition, then it would be easier to convince him to accept the serum. If he couldn't overcome this issue, then we could

place him somewhere else other than the main party. However…

'It's less likely… '

It was less likely that he would give up on himself, and that was the reason why I came up with this plan. After organizing my thoughts, the corner of my lips went up slightly, and I spoke to Park Deok-Gu again.

"But you should still be on your toes. Even if it's just a rare-ranked dungeon, we need to keep in mind that an accident can happen."

"Yeah, Mr. Ki-Young is right," Kim Ye-Ri agreed.

"I already know that. Since that dude Hyun-Sung won't be with us, I'll have to be on my toes even more," he said.

"But I'm not telling you to go all out because we purposely got a dungeon with low difficulty. Be on your toes, but don't move hastily," I advised.

"*Ugh*… you really didn't have to purchase a dungeon…" he muttered.

"The other guilds are busy making preparations for when the tutorial dungeon opens up. It was cheap, so there's no need to feel burdened," I told him.

"That's a relief," he remarked.

It had been a while since I saw him smile. Actually, he smiled pretty often in front of other people to hide his actual feelings, but he looked a bit relaxed right now. If I had to exaggerate, it was as if he wasn't interested about going to the dungeon. Park Deok-Gu was pretty timid, so I didn't know what he was thinking, but I was relieved that he wasn't acting like when he had visited the nest.

'Not bad.'

His condition wasn't bad, but I thought that he really wanted to fix the relationship between Jung Ha-Yan and me. He was trying to read Jung Ha-Yan's expression, and I was sure he was worried about her, as she kept thinking about the code of conduct I had explained to her before.

'Tsk, that fool.'

It was actually Jung Ha-Yan who should feel bad and apologize for what happened last time. I wasn't sure why Park Deok-Gu was looking for an opportunity to apologize, but seeing him act like that was kind of cute.

When I looked away, I saw the five party members who were going to join us for this expedition. It was me, Park Deok-Gu, Jung Ha-Yan, Kim Ye-Ri, and a priest who would help us during the expedition. I originally wanted to bring Sun Hee-Young, but the timing wasn't right. Hwang Jung-Yeon, who was pretty close to Park Deok-Gu, also couldn't join us because she was playing a huge role on the administration side of the guild.

I thought that Hwang Jung-Yeon could be at the center of this plan, but when thinking about her poor acting skills, it was probably best if she just stayed put. It was an obvious decision when I recalled the Juliena case. Even though Hwang Jung-Yeon loved watching soap operas, her acting was terrible, and aside from me, the other members were horrible actors. Jung Ha-Yan's awkward hand and body gestures were making Park Deok-Gu feel anxious and Kim Ye-Ri, whose emotions I couldn't read, had bad acting skills.

'Bad acting.'

That was why a priest from the Red Mercenary Guild, Ahn Ki-Mo, had joined us. We needed someone who could get rid of the awkward situation that Kim Ye-Ri and Jung Ha-Yan had created.

Park Deok-Gu shattered the ice at the right time.

"*Oh*, now that I think about it, I don't think you've introduced us to the priest… Introduce him to us if you don't mind, hyung-nim," Park Deok-Gu suggested.

"Is this your first time meeting him, Deok-Gu?" I asked.

"Yeah, it is," he replied.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Deok-Gu. I'm Ahn Ki-Mo."

"*Ohh*, so you're Ki-Mo, bro," Park Deok-Gu said.

"*Haha*. That's me. I managed to get in contact while being part of the Red Mercenary Guild, so I decided to join," Ahn Ki-Mo mentioned.

“Miss Hee-Young’s busy recently, so we used her connections,” I told him.

“*Ahh*… so that’s what happened,” Ahn Ki-Mo remarked.

I guess Park Deok-Gu was happy that Ahn Ki-Mo had joined us. Surprisingly, he enjoyed meeting new people, and Ahn Ki-Mo had a likable face.

“Thank you for joining us, Mr. Ki-Mo,” I said.

“It’s nothing, Mr. Ki-Young. The Blue Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild are allies, and I was bored anyway. You have no idea how honored I am to be able to join the party that has been the talk of the town recently,” he complimented.

“We’re just lucky. The only dungeons we have cleared are an epic-ranked dungeon and a rare-ranked dungeon,” I informed him.

“The number of dungeons you’ve cleared isn’t important.” He pointed out.

“*Hahaha*…” I chuckled.

‘He’s a natural… ’

From what I had heard, he majored in theater and even though he didn’t get famous, he was pretty known in Daehak-ro[1]. I could remember being told that he was originally a combatant instead of an ordinary priest, but no matter where I looked, I couldn’t see any traces of his experience in close combat. I wasn’t sure if he was trying harder than usual, but on the outside, he looked like an ordinary priest, which made him more than qualified to join our party.

The party members were heading toward the dungeon while chatting with each other. We could have moved faster by riding a carriage, but I thought it would be better to move while talking to each other, so I created a picnic-like atmosphere. It would be good if Jung Ha-Yan's poor acting skills didn't blow her cover, but it would be better if she just outright avoided Park Deok-Gu.

‘This is actually better.’

It was better if she maintained the status quo rather than awkwardly join in.

Kim Ye-Ri would stay quiet and make comments here and there, but thankfully, I

didn't think her friend had influenced her that much.

It didn't take the friendly Park Deok-Gu long to become close to Ahn Ki-Mo. We took several breaks while walking toward the dungeon, and we spent a lot of time building a camp we were only going to spend a night in. Even though we didn't drink a lot, we drank while eating and enjoying the atmosphere. I could say that almost everything was perfect up until now, and as someone that had a lot to worry about, taking the chance to relax like this wasn't so bad. Having a nice scenery, atmosphere, and food was basically a blessing, and the amusing part was that Kim Ye-Ri was surprisingly good at cooking.

"Bridal course," Kim Ye-Ri said.

She gave a short answer when I asked where she learned to cook, and I couldn't help but think about that rumor regarding that trash, Kim Hyun-Sung.

Anyway, the party neared the dungeon as we shared different stories and when we got to the point where we couldn't go back to the city anymore, I discreetly signaled Ahn Ki-Mo. This was the end of the peaceful break, so I thought this was a good time to say something, and Ahn Ki-Mo must have read my signal, as his voice broke the quiet atmosphere.

"I think we're almost there."

"You're right, Mr. Ki-Mo. I think we can enter the dungeon tomorrow morning," I added.

"You said it was a rare-ranked dungeon, right?" he asked.

"That's right," I replied.

"Looking at our party formation, I don't think we'll have that big of a problem. With your levels, I'm sure we'll clear the dungeon easily," he said.

"Of course. We have Ki-Young hyung-nim and Ha-Yan noonim…" Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

"However, once we approach the vicinity, we'll have to be on our toes," Ahn Ki-Mo suggested.

"*Ahh*… so you're talking about that incident," I said.

"So you know about it, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," he replied.

Park Deok-Gu looked at us as if he was curious about our topic. He had no idea what we were talking about. When Ahn Ki-Mo saw his face, he turned his head and continued.

"*Oh*, I guess Mr. Deok-Gu doesn't know about it."

"What are you talking about?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Actually, a few years ago, a clan was completely annihilated near this area. There hasn't been any official announcement, but those from a large guild had probably heard the story at least once," Ahn Ki-Mo replied.

It was a lie.

"Near here?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"That's right. During that time, Lindel didn't make an official announcement about the incident, but those who do know probably know," he replied.

"About what?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"The Murder Brigade," Ahn Ki-Mo replied.

The atmosphere became quiet and the slight change in the atmosphere caused Park Deok-Gu to gulp. Even Ahn Ki-Mo, who always had a smile on his face, maintained a slightly nervous expression as he talked.

'This guy… '

I brought him after hearing that he had great acting skills, but he was obviously really skilled. Despite knowing that this was a lie, I started to feel nervous because of the atmosphere. Ahn Ki-Mo held his hands tightly as cold sweat rolled down his face, and it became clear that he feared the Murder Brigade. His slightly rough breathing and expression were near perfection. So, this was what people meant when they talked about soulful acting.

‘This guy… I actually want to recruit him.’

Ahn Ki-Mo continued as he put all his soul into his acting.

“The Murderer Clan was composed of psychopathic murderers who had moved to the Holy Empire.”

To be precise, it was the clan the deceased psychopathic murderer, Jung Jin-Ho, had created in the future.

‘I owe you today, Jung Jin-Ho!’

I couldn’t help but feel grateful for him.

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1. Seoul’s theater and performing arts district ☜

CHAPTER 202
LEE KI-YOUNG'S HIDDEN CAMERA PRANK (3)

The psychopathic murderer, Jung Jin-Ho. In some ways, he was the biggest victim in his second life because if the future had continued the way it was supposed to, then he may have created the Murderer Clan—Murder Brigade—by now.

'He could have been Juliena's actual owner… '

I imagined him using Juilena because I thought the two were really compatible, and he had undeniably created the Murder Brigade. As for how I discovered it, it was naturally because…

'…I saw it.'

Actually, I didn't see it with my own eyes. Based on the conversation Lee Ki-Young and Park Deok-Gu had in the past life, it wasn't difficult to figure out that we had been involved with the brigade. We didn't actually join the clan because Park Deok-Gu dissuaded me, but I personally became friends with Jung Jin-Ho. The Murder Brigade was an unofficial clan that was going to be created a year or two later. I had no idea about the details, but there was one thing I was sure of. Jung Jin-Ho had been a key member in the creation of the clan, and since he was dead, the clan wouldn't be created. I came up with the name—Murder Brigade—for the imaginary Murderer Clan, but it had a nice ring to it.

'Just because he's not here doesn't mean the members won't do anything, so the brigade could still be established… '

Of course, they wouldn't really be influential.

While I was having other thoughts, Ahn Ki-Mo continued his story with a serious expression. The nervousness written on his face had to be the reason why Park Deok-Gu listened closely while staring at him.

"Murderer Clan?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

“That’s right,” Ahn Ki-Mo answered.

“You mean there are people like that around Lindel?” he asked.

“Yes. Even though the city has people that patrol regularly, the Murderer Clan’s methods are very secretive and private. Even our guild hasn't had much luck capturing them. It’s been a while since that incident, but it doesn’t hurt to be extra careful,” he replied.

“Have they shown themselves recently?” Park Deok-Gu questioned.

“If they did, I don’t think we would have come all the way here for a dungeon expedition, *hahaha*,” Ahn Ki-Mo laughed.

“That’s a relief…” Park Deok-Gu muttered.

‘He’s pretty good at drawing people in.’

It was a classic cliche in horror movies, and he even ad-libbed because what he had just said wasn’t in the script. After building up the tension, it seemed like he was trying to fix it by telling them that it wasn’t going to happen anymore. This was a pretty good start considering the fact that the main character’s party would usually end up in a bad situation. In other words, you had to throw the bait first to catch fish.

When I turned away for a moment, Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Ye-Ri were displaying their horrible acting skills by saying things like, “Oh, is that so?” or “Th-That’s scary,” so I had no choice but to make a comment.

“Don’t worry too much, Deok-Gu. It happened a long time ago, and I’m sure he only told that story as a precaution. Isn’t that right, Mr. Ki-Mo?”

“Yes, *haha*. You’re right. It happened a long time ago, but it still bothers me…” Ahn Ki-Mo replied.

As the person responsible for the party’s safety, Park Deok-Gu quickly continued talking.

“What’s still bothering you?”

‘He actually fell for it.’

Park Deok-Gu fell for it without even questioning it, and Ahn Ki-Mo must have realized that Park Deok-Gu had fallen for it because he started sending signals to me. The signals were unnecessary, as I knew what was going on without them.

"*Oh,* it's nothing. You really don't have to worry, Mr. Deok-Gu," Ahn Ki-Mo answered.

"I was just asking because I'm really curious, Ki-Mo bro," Park Deok-Gu added.

"There has been a slight increase in the frequency of kidnapping these days," Ahn Ki-Mo started.

"Kidnapping?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yes, but it's not enough for us to be worried about it. The kidnapping cases that happen in the forest every year are like a courtesy call for us," Ahn Ki-Mo explained.

"Is that so?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yes. It's because the new recruits who had arrived in the last batch are starting to gain confidence, and I'm referring to you and Mr. Ki-Young's comrades. One's stats usually increases a lot in their first year…" Ahn Ki-Mo added.

"*Ah…*"

"The city doesn't encourage going on an excessive amount of expeditions, but people don't usually listen. Despite the fact that it hasn't been a year since your party entered the continent, thanks to the two of your members being selected for the Eight Seats, the new recruits from the previous quarter are overflowing with confidence. *Hahaha*. Of course, I'm not blaming you, Mr. Ki-Young. Accidents happened because of the choices they made," Ahn Ki-Mo explained.

"Are you sure that's the only reason?" Park Deok-Gu questioned.

"It's really nothing for you to be worried about. Of course, it happens a bit frequently to say that it's simply because the new recruits are overflowing with energy, but the Red Mercenary Guild has already finished investigating that. The guild searched several times, but there were no traces or indication that members of the Murderer Clan were staying here," Ahn Ki-Mo answered.

"The Red Mercenary Guild is trustworthy…" Park Deok-Gu remarked.

Despite that, Park Deok-Gu seemed suspicious. I thought he wasn't much of a thinker, but seeing the frown on his face made me think that he was organizing the information in his head in his own way. I wasn't sure if it was because Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't here or if I was just having a good feeling about this, but Park Deok-Gu had really fallen for it. I guess he was really worried about the fact that he was the only person who could protect us. Of course, we had Kim Ye-Ri, but she was more of an assassin. If she had to worry about the rearguard after we went into battle, it meant that the entire situation was bad. We simply came here to have fun, so I couldn't help but laugh when I saw Park Deok-Gu looking so serious.

"Let's get going," I suggested.

"Hyung-nim." Park Deok-Gu called out.

"Yeah?"

"I-It's nothing…" he stuttered.

I was sure he was going to suggest that we head back, and if the goal of this expedition weren't a reconciliation, he would have suggested that we turn back because he seemed like he was feeling a sense of foreboding.

'I personally like that reaction… '

I liked that he was always worried and was always thinking about the worst-case scenario. Naturally, I had to give deduct some points from him for not acting on it, but he still passed my evaluation.

As we continued walking, Park Deok-Gu was the only one who looked so serious, and it felt like the entire party was being affected by it. He was probably thinking that he had to keep his guard up.

When we approached the dungeon, he started to ask me several questions, and they were all about the dungeon's origin.

"Hyung-nim, where was this dungeon…"

"I'm not sure. I didn't check its origins, and I only bought it after talking to several guilds. The Black Swan Guild previously owned this dungeon," I replied.

“I see…”

“Is there something wrong?” I asked.

“No, it’s nothing like that. Does the Black Swan Guild have some kind of connection with that brigade or whatever?” Park Deok-Gu asked once more.

“I’m sure they’re somewhat connected because when the brigade was still active, the Black Swan Guild was one of the guilds that represented Lindel. Are you still worried about the brigade?” I asked him.

“It’s not that. I just feel a bit uneasy…”

“Relax. I thought a lot about it before purchasing it. It has been years since that incident, and the brigade has no reason to target Lindel. Of course, they don’t exactly need a reason to make a move…” I told him.

“I’m sure you’re right… But for some reason… I mean, I’m not all that important, but you’re an important figure now within the city,” Park Deok-Gu explained.

“What?” I asked.

“Being one of the eight people to represent the empire is symbolic, and all I’m saying is that for some reason, I feel like something is going to happen, and I’m getting worried. *Ugh*. I’m trying not to think about it, but I can’t stop…” he muttered.

He was right. It seemed like he wasn’t able to explain it properly, but I understood why he felt anxious. He had to be thinking that the timing of the events was strange when considering my position as one of the seat holders of the empire’s Eight Seats. Based on the timing of it all, it was difficult to say that the city was safe because the large and mid-sized guilds were getting ready to greet the new recruits, so their security wasn’t as tight as usual. Assuming that a certain group was targeting a random group or me, this would be the best time to do it. Rumors about Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild buying a dungeon would easily spread throughout Lindel, and the informant of the brigade could acquire that information. They could then use the death of the Holy Empire’s honorary bishop and a member of the Eight Seats as a signal to show that the brigade had returned.

However, Park Deok-Gu considered these as a fabric of his imagination. The piece of information that we had thrown at him was regarding the brigade, and we didn’t

have enough information to piece the puzzles together. That was why he kept on asking me questions. He was somewhat drawing the puzzle in his head, so I was sure he was trying to find the other pieces to complete it. I couldn't check whether the pieces he was looking for were the same pieces I had drawn out or not, but I genuinely wanted to applaud him.

'You've grown… '

Park Deok-Gu had grown mentally and physically, making him different from the times when he was just following me around. There may not have been a life-changing moment that caused this transformation, but I was sure that he had grown.

Anyway, his anxiety began to grow more and more. Ahn Ki-Mo was playing a crucial role because he continuously threw baits that were like previews of a horror movie. The fact that Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Ye-Ri remained quiet really helped as well. Park Deok-Gu became increasingly suspicious as time went on, so I continued to comfort the nervous Park Deok-Gu. Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Ye-Ri also kept telling him that it was going to be okay. Ahn Ki-Mo released a hearty laugh while saying that maybe he shouldn't have mentioned the brigade, and just like the main characters of a horror movie, we were going into the danger zone. In that genre, the first accident usually happened just like that—when someone thought they were safe, things would go wrong.

The timing was also the best because Park Deok-Gu was currently afraid and anxious about the unknown.

'They should show up soon.'

Based on our location, this was the perfect time for them to appear. It would be fine if they started off with a surprise or if they approached us while pretending to be adventurers. However, Lee Ji-Hye was the one who planned this part out, and I was curious because I had no idea what was going to happen.

Just as we were about to arrive at the dungeon's entrance, and while we were doing the final preparations, I saw a woman with a cold expression.

'Is that it?'

I had this thought because the woman obviously looked strange, and she was blocking our path.

“Hey… W-who are you? Did you come here by yourself?”

Park Deok-Gu asked cautiously, but she didn’t answer. In contrast to Park Deok-Gu’s apprehension, I was kind of disappointed.

‘That’s it?’

I recalled how Lee Ji-Hye boasted when she told me not to worry and that she would make proper preparations. I expected her to send the best members of the Black Swan Guild, but she only sent one person. I spread my mana around us just in case, but it seemed that woman was the only person Lee Ji-Hye had sent. Of course, it didn’t really matter who she sent because it was just an act, but the tension was lacking.

‘Tsk… ’

But then an explosive bloodthirstiness enveloped the place…

‘Huh?’

My hands and feet started to tremble, and I staggered backward without realizing it. I wasn’t unfamiliar with this sensation, as I recalled feeling this way from Cha Hee-Ra.

‘Uh… ’

The moment the explosive mana enveloped the place, I realized who Lee Ji-Hye had sent. She was another strong individual within Lindel on the same level as Cha Hee-Ra and a member of the Eight Seats. The guild master of the Black Swan Guild and Kim Hyun-Sung’s admirer…

‘Park Yeon-Joo?’

But before I could organize my thoughts, Park Deok-Gu screamed.

“Run!!!”

CHAPTER 203
HEROES ARE MADE (1)

To make it legit, I asked Lee Ji-Hye for a favor.

"I really want it to feel like we're in danger, and it can't be awkward," I told her.

"Don't we just need to make your party feel powerless? However, an ordinary guild member won't do," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Is that right?"

"Ugh… the executives are busy right now, and it won't really change anything just because one executive joins the group… Let me take care of this. It can't be helped. I don't know if it'll work, but if the deal works out, then I'm sure you'll get the result you want," she said.

"Do you have something in mind?" I asked.

"It's a secret for now. You can open the gift when you get there," she replied.

I didn't think much of it because I had never doubted Lee Ji-Hye's work. I did think that maybe she had prepared an extravagant event, but I had never imagined that she would use the master of the guild she was a part of. Moreover, I couldn't help but think that I knew what kind of deal she had made with the guild master. I was sure her guild master had only agreed to participate in this event under the condition that she would get to meet Kim Hyun-Sung. Despite the condition, it was undeniable that Lee Ji-Hye had done it yet again.

'However… '

This was too legit.

"Run!!!"

I knew it just by looking at Park Deok-Gu's violent reaction. He knew that we stood

no chance after he bore the brunt of Park Yeon-Joo's overflowing mana and bloodthirstiness. Of course, everyone here was considered strong, but despite having the worst stats, Park Deok-Gu had grown a lot when compared to the other players who had been here for a year. However, it didn't mean his growth was enough for him to face a strong player like her.

'She's on a different level.'

…He was probably thinking like this.

"W-What's going—"

"Hyung-nim! Hurry up and run! Hurry!" Park Deok-Gu screamed once more.

He had definitely thought he was the only one who discovered the danger because the way he yelled was amusing. However, his actions showed how much he cared about our safety, but under the assumption that Park Yeon-Joo wasn't acting, it was understandable for him to react that way. This was different from the time we had faced Cha Hee-Ra. Back then, our party was balanced because we had Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin. In addition, Cha Hee-Ra was going easy on us.

No matter how much I thought about it, Park Deok-Gu couldn't guarantee the safety of the rearguards, and he had definitely reacted that way because he had realized that, but I had also grown since then.

First, showing resistance was the right thing to do. Instinctively, Jung Ha-Yan started to recite a spell, and Kim Ye-Ri held her daggers as she put her guard up toward the woman looking at us.

'Shit… what if she's really part of the brigade?'

I felt so threatened that I even started to think that way. I used Mind's Eye to check, and after confirming that she *really* was Park Yeon-Joo, I felt a bit relieved, but still…

'She's scary… '

As if her sudden disappearing act wasn't enough, the way she ran toward us like a madwoman was horrifying.

"Aaaah!!!"

Since there was somewhat of a distance between us, Jung Ha-Yan managed to activate her spell first.

Boom!

With that sound, dozens of mana started raining down on Park Yeon-Joo. It had to be a homing-type spell because it turned and tracked her, but Park Yeon-Joo blocked all of them using one dagger before she continued to run toward us. The purpose of the spell was to test her, but I guess it didn't really affect her, so I had no choice but to put mana into the Dragon Breath Potion. I was doing this to shake off the threatening atmosphere she was giving off rather than to do my best and resist her.

Buuuuuuzz!!!

Booooooooooom!!!

There was an explosion after Park Yeon-Joo blocked Jung Ha-Yan's attack. Naturally, I didn't think she was going to get hurt because even if we combined all of our powers, we would be no match for her.

It had to be Park Deok-Gu's first time seeing the firepower of the Dragon Breath Potion because he looked at me both speechless and stupefied.

"Focus, you pig!" I yelled.

"O-Okay, hyung-nim," he replied.

Currently, there wasn't anything Park Deok-Gu could do because Park Yeon-Joo was still trying to close the gap between us while we were trying to widen it. Jung Ha-Yan activated spells to shake her off while I responded to the unknown variables.

'Because it hurts my pride… '

This was also a way for Jung Ha-Yan and me to test our skills.

"Windy Steps!"

My body felt lighter when she activated that spell. It wasn't enough compared to Park Yeon-Joo's agility stats, but it helped.

After the explosion stopped, I saw Park Yeon-Joo walking out of the smoke with an annoyed expression.

'Did we make her mad? Shit… '

I could understand it because I suddenly hurled a legendary-ranked potion at her.

I moved faster than before, and I imbued my mana into the potion again. I had two seconds before it exploded, but it wouldn't even take two seconds for Park Yeon-Joo to reach us.

Buuuuuuuuuzz!

Since I had already imbued my mana into the potion, I had to throw it, and even though we were inside the blast radius, I didn't really care. I placed my hand on the ground after throwing the potion, and I heard a crackling noise as a large dragon's tail wrapped around the party.

Booooooooom!!!

Park Yeon-Joo was the only person within the blast radius. Park Deok-Gu looked at me again in shock.

"T-This is—"

"I have accomplished a few things recently…" I interrupted him.

"I see…" he muttered.

The moment the dragon's tail disappeared, Jung Ha-Yan used her magic.

'Maybe we could actually win.'

I imagined it for a moment, but the way Park Yeon-Joo broke through Jung Ha-Yan's area of effect magic and got close to us was shocking. She glared at us with an even more annoyed expression.

'Ack… '

I thought that we had widened the distance between us a bit more.

'Huh?'

It certainly felt like she was a bit far from us, but she had instantly arrived in the middle of our party and was glaring at me.

'Is this her attribute?'

All I did was check her name through Mind's Eye, but she probably had an attribute or stat that allowed her to instantly close the gap.

When I quickly fiddled with the catalyst, flames appeared in my hand as it crackled, but there was nothing I could do because Park Yeon-Joo immediately swung her dagger at me. Before Park Deok-Gu could respond, Kim Ye-Ri jumped in with her daggers.

Boom!

"I heard the Blue Guild has a lot of talented people… It must be true."

I heard her quiet voice.

Kim Ye-Ri deserved to be praised for being able to follow Park Yeon-Joo's attack and block it. In addition, Kim Ye-Ri was the only person who reacted when Park Yeon-Joo suddenly appeared in the middle of our group. However, her fast reaction didn't mean she could stop her. She managed to block one of her attacks, but she wouldn't be able to block Park Yeon-Joo's follow-up attacks. After retrieving her dagger, Park Yeon-Joo immediately kicked Kim Ye-Ri, and she flew into a tree on the other side while coughing blood.

'Retire.'

"Ye-Ri!"

"I would worry about yourself, Lee Ki-Young," Park Yeon-Joo warned.

"*Aaaahhh!*"

Park Deok-Gu was horrified when Kim Ye-Ri flew and crashed into a tree, causing him to charge toward Park Yeon-Joo with his shield.

“Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo, take care of Ye-Ri!” I ordered.

“O-Okay!” Ahn Ki-Mo replied.

While Ahn Ki-Mo was running toward Kim Ye-Ri, dozens of daggers and swords pierced his back.

‘Is that her attribute, too?’

“*Cough!*”

Those injuries would have definitely killed him in an instant, but when I heard him scream, it made me think that the weapons hadn’t damaged his vitals. There was a high chance that those weapons were custom-made.

“*Gaah…*”

Despite that, seeing Ahn Ki-Mo drag himself while showing off his acting skills was a sight to see. When I saw how he continued to act even though no one was watching made me realize that he was truly an actor.

‘He really doesn’t need to go that far… ’

Seeing him screaming while crawling toward Kim Ye-Ri to heal her made him seem like someone who had lost his comrade. His passionate acting caused me to focus on him, but Ahn Ki-Mo wasn’t the main character of this stage. It was Park Deok-Gu. We had prepared all this just for him.

I saw Park Deok-Gu facing Park Yeon-Joo while biting his lips, and he was obviously no match for her. He was actually struggling because there was a difference between their agility stats. He couldn’t stop Park Yeon-Joo when she completely ignored him and charged at Jung Ha-Yan. In the end, Park Yeon-Joo stabbed Jung Ha-Yan’s chest with a black sword before retreating. Horrified, I went over to Jung Ha-Yan and poured my potion on her chest.

‘She didn’t actually stab her, right?’

I was able to confirm that she wasn’t injured when Jung Ha-Yan slightly opened her eyes. I was kind of curious about what the sword was composed of, but that wasn’t important right now.

“O… oppa… I love…” Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

“You’re going to stay alive, Ha-Yan,” I told her.

“I love you…” she muttered.

“Ha-Yan!!!” I screamed

I had never asked her to be the tragic heroine, but when she was done with her acting, Jung Ha-Yan’s breathing started to slow down. When Park Deok-Gu saw that, he started to swing his shield while screaming.

“*Aaaahhh!!!*”

I expected it, but he looked quite sad. His face was filled with resentment toward none other than himself, as he couldn’t do anything.

Everything happened so fast, and even though I didn’t know what he was thinking right now, I saw tears in his eyes, which made me feel kind of bad.

‘This is all for you, Deok-Gu.’

I was sure…

‘You can do it.’

After Park Yeon-Joo stabbed Jung Ha-Yan with the black sword, she didn’t target me because I was still mourning over Jung Ha-Yan. She probably thought it was best to get rid of me after making Park Deok-Gu feel weak because she thought that would make the situation a bit more dramatic.

Park Deok-Gu continued to swing his shield and sword, but obviously, his sword couldn’t even reach Park Yeon-Joo.

“Shit!!! Shit!!!”

Even Kim Ye-Ri couldn’t touch her, so it was natural that his sword wouldn’t reach her. Park Yeon-Joo was actually messing with him, which made it seem like he was really getting bullied. I felt even worse when I saw how his figure became covered in more blood as time went on, but despite his injuries, Park Deok-Gu was still holding

on to his sword. The reason was obvious. Everyone knew that Park Deok-Gu was trying his best to protect me right now.

“Run away, hyung-nim! Run far away!” he yelled.

He kept saying the same thing over and over again.

“Hyung-nim!” he cried out.

‘I’m really sorry… ’

The situation had become big to the point that I wouldn’t be able to say anything if Park Deok-Gu decided to beat me to death after the reveal. When I was still planning this, I knew I would feel bad, but my heart broke when I saw how he was crying while screaming at me to run. Everyone here knew that all this was just an act, but to him, it was real. I was convinced that he valued my life more than his when he kept on telling me to run while blocking Park Yeon-Joo. He was showing it through his actions, not just with words. Unfortunately, passion and determination wouldn’t resolve a situation.

As time went on, the bloody Park Deok-Gu started to glare at Park Yeon-Joo while collecting his breath. He wasn’t in the condition to move anymore. When Park Yeon-Joo lifted her hand, a black sword dropped from the sky, and she looked as if she was going to execute him.

“Run… hyung-nim… take… noonim with you…” Park Deok-Gu weakly muttered.

The moment the black sword fell toward the mumbling Park Deok-Gu, I moved and stood in front of him. It was nothing more than me moving my body according to Park Yeon-Joo’s signal, but it was pretty dramatic. It felt uncomfortable to move my body, but it was really interesting how I didn't feel any pain, and of course, I heard a low voice behind me. To Park Deok-Gu, I probably looked like I was spreading my arms out to protect him. It was *definitely* a dramatic scene.

“Hyung-nim?” Park Deok-Gu called out.

“*Ah…*”

“Hyung-nim?” he called out once again.

“Run… you pig…” I mumbled.

When I looked at Park Deok-Gu while spitting out the red potion I was holding in my mouth, his face distorted.

“Hyung… hyung-nim… hyung-nim…!” he repeatedly muttered.

“*Ah…*”

“Hyung-nim! Hyung-nim!!!” he screamed.

“Always remember… Deok-Gu,” I started.

“Don’t go… don’t go… I remember so… please… hold on a little longer… a little longer…” he begged.

Park Deok-Gu’s snot-covered and tear-streaked face turned cold. He had definitely realized it.

‘He can still save us.’

Both Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Ye-Ri were still slightly breathing, and so was I.

‘Nice.’

The pig, who previously didn’t know how to do anything, slowly stood up. He had a hard time moving his body, but rather than crying during his final moments; he decided to get up and fight.

‘Alright! Damn, that’s what I’m talking about!’

The way he grabbed his sword and shield before standing in front of me made him look pretty reliable. It was then that I heard him mumble.

“I can… do better.”

They were the words that kept him going.

The preparation was complete, and the situation had become dramatic enough. In a situation like this, heroes would usually break through their limits once or twice, and

obviously, I trusted Park Deok-Gu to do that as well. The fact that he held his sword and shield once again proved that he was worthy enough.

“I can… do better,” he repeated.

Park Yeon-Joo maintained her cold expression, and she waved her hand again, causing dozens of swords to fall toward me. However, Park Deok-Gu lifted his shield, and as he released an unknown shout, a golden light enveloped his body.

“A job change…”

[Checking Player Park Deok-Gu’s Unique Habit.]

[Unstoppable Hero]

‘That’s what I’m talking about!!!’

I couldn’t help but think that this result was inevitable.

CHAPTER 204
HEROES ARE MADE (2)

Park Deok-Gu had long filled his experience bar up to the brim. The golden light that was bursting from his body was so bright that I couldn't even open my eyes. I was proud because it was like the time when I changed into Dragon Alchemist.

'You did it!! Shit!!!'

Naturally, I was worried that all this planning and acting would become a waste, but the result was way better than I had imagined. Honestly, if I hadn't seen the Dark World with Kasungao Yuno, then I wouldn't have been able to come up with this plan.

When Park Deok-Gu embraced me during the time dozens of magic and arrows showered down, I focused on the fact that the Lee Ki-Young of the Dark World had survived. Park Deok-Gu *definitely* had a strong body, and even now, his endurance and stamina stats were great, but that didn't mean he would be able to save me. No matter how strong he was, his body would eventually break down, and the fact that he was able to save me despite the many magic spells that could destroy a city wasn't simply a miracle. At that time, Park Deok-Gu had probably experienced the same situation he was experiencing right now. If my assumption was correct, he had potential.

Even while blocking Park Yeon-Joo's sword with his shield, the light continued to shine. I was able to check Park Deok-Gu's status window right after the blinding light faded away.

'Nice!'

[Checking Player Park Deok-Gu's Status Window and Stats.]

[Name - Park Deok-Gu]

[Title - None. Please work harder.]

[Age - 23]

[Nature - A simple, ignorant, and ardent person]

[Job - Shield of Faith - Legendary Rank]

[Job Effect - Acquired basic swordsmanship knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired basic shielding knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired intermediate shielding knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced shielding knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced magic knowledge]

[Stats]

[Strength - 70/Above epic growth limit]

[Agility - 35/Below rare growth limit]

[Stamina - 81/Above epic growth limit]

[Intelligence - 29/Below rare growth limit]

[Endurance - 90/Above epic growth limit]

[Luck - 29/Below average growth limit]

[Magic - 28/Above average growth limit]

[Overall Review - Player Park Deok-Gu has reached 90 points in his endurance stats. Even though his magic and agility stats are still the same, his high stamina and endurance work well with his legendary-ranked job ‘Shield of Faith,’ and he has grown enough to be able to rise to the top. The limit on his stamina and endurance is

a bit bothersome, but since it's above and not below, I think he can grow a little more based on how much effort he puts in. Of course, he will suffer a lot in the process, so please support and encourage him as much as you can.]

'Wow… his endurance is 90?'

It was so ridiculous that I started to cough, and as the overall review had mentioned, the fact that an important stat reached 90 meant that a path where he could rise to the top had opened for him. Of course, his other stats were pretty bad, but there had to be a meaning behind him obtaining a legendary-ranked job and reaching ninety endurance points.

Moreover…

'Advanced magic knowledge?'

This kind of knowledge was something that people like Park Yeon-Joo, Cha Hee-Ra, the dead Ito Sota, Victor Hart, and Kim Hyun-Sung possessed, so the fact that he had it was *very* surprising. Park Deok-Gu's magic was only 28 points, so I guess the number of magic points didn't matter when it came to acquiring knowledge about it. I was sure it would be difficult for him to put this knowledge to use right now, but the fact that it would help him climb one step higher was undeniable.

The most surprising part of all of this was the huge increase in his endurance points. When I last checked his status window, his endurance wasn't even above eighty, so it was obvious how his endurance reached ninety points. He had definitely received a bonus from the new job he had unlocked.

[Shield of Faith - Legendary Rank]

[From ancient times, Shield of Faith wasn't a name for a class but a title made to honor great warriors. Only warriors who had risked their lives to protect others earned this title, and they were enshrined in a tomb of warriors where they were worshipped by the ancient warriors for centuries. Upon inheriting the will of the great heroes, the title—Shield of Faith was bestowed upon Park Deok-Gu as a job. His endurance has increased by 15 points, and excluding his endurance stat, all other

stats decreased by 1 point. He has been blessed by the heroes and has acquired advanced shielding knowledge and advanced magic knowledge. As the Shield of Faith's special job effect, the legendary-ranked attribute, Noble Sacrifice, has been unlocked.]

[Checking Player Park Deok-Gu's Attribute.]

[Noble Sacrifice - Legendary Rank]

[For a certain period of time, damage to the selected target and external shock will be transferred over to the user.]

'No way!!!'

I knew he would unlock a job, but this was too much. I couldn't keep my mouth closed because his endurance stat had increased by 15 points, and he had also obtained an attribute that would allow him to receive other people's external shock and damage for them. His low agility stat had also been resolved through his new attribute, as he could still receive damage for someone else even when they were unreachable.

I wasn't sure if this was the growth Park Deok-Gu wanted, but he had just gotten a job that had turned him into the most amazing meat shield throughout the entire continent.

"Aaahhh!!!"

When I heard a *click*, a transparent shield appeared in front of me. This was probably his attribute, Noble Sacrifice.

'I don't want to get hit by him.'

I was cheering him on as he was overflowing with dignity, but I was worried about one thing. If he found out that the black sword could actually deal no damage, the situation would become very serious, and since we had already come this far, we had to hide the fact that all of this was just a prank. I guess Park Deok-Gu had obtained

more than his attribute, as I wasn't getting any more injuries since he started blocking Park Yeon-Joo's attacks. However, this hidden camera prank would end once a black sword stabbed through me.

'I can't let that happen.'

All of this was for him, but I couldn't even imagine how betrayed he would feel if he discovered that all of this was staged. When I made eye contact with Park Yeon-Joo, I had to nod at her to tell her to disappear and then she slowly turned her head. I assumed that she would retreat, but Kim Ye-Ri was in the direction where she had turned her head to, and the latter was losing consciousness.

'Shit… '

Park Yeon-Joo had *definitely* misunderstood my nod as a signal to attack Kim Ye-Ri, as her black swords started to fly toward Kim Ye-Ri. Even after seeing the golden light on Park Deok-Gu's body, she must have misunderstood my signal as a sign to continue with the act, and I guess she was just *really* passionate with all this, as meeting Kim Hyun-Sung was part of the deal.

'She's crazy!'

"Nooo!!!"

Park Deok-Gu extended his hand out, but it couldn't reach her. In the end, he had definitely thought that activating his attribute was the right thing to do because I saw transparent shields covering Kim Ye-Ri on the floor.

'Shit!'

The moment the swords landed on the shield, he could discover that all of this was just an act, so when I tried to quickly use alchemy, I saw Ahn Ki-Mo getting stabbed by the swords in Kim Ye-Ri's place.

'So, you still got it! You bastard!'

"Nice one, Ahn Ki-Mo…" I mumbled.

I guess he was showing that he still had some life in him, and the way he acted was so great that I complimented him without realizing it.

"*Ugggh…*"

"Ki… Ki-Mo, bro!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

"I can't let… this child die yet," Ahn Ki-Mo muttered.

The scene was already touching and dramatic enough that he didn't have to say that. Now, it seemed that Park Yeon-Joo wasn't the only person overflowing with passion in this act—Ahn Ki-Mo was *really* into his role as well.

'Let's stop now.'

Being overdramatic wasn't good. I know they wanted Park Deok-Gu to feel touched and desperate, but they were in the danger zone, which caused me to gulp out of nervousness. It was time to put an end to this.

While Park Deok-Gu was focused on Ahn Ki-Mo, I kept sending Park Yeon-Joo the 'OK' sign. I saw her nod, so she definitely understood what I meant this time.

Park Deok-Gu had gotten noticeably stronger. As if he was getting rewarded for all the work he had put in, not only had he gotten compensated for what had been holding him back, but he had also received a legendary-ranked attribute and job. Still, I didn't think that was enough to defeat Park Yeon-Joo. Naturally, I thought maybe he was a worthy opponent after seeing him block all of her attacks, but his role was to protect the rearguard, not to fight people in close combat.

'Park Yeon-Joo isn't serious, anyway.'

Rather than putting on a poor act of being defeated, it was better for Park Yeon-Joo to leave the situation like this. She must have thought that this was the right time to leave, as she got ready to leave. But of course, there was a *real* reason why she started to retreat because right at that moment, we heard a loud voice.

'The Black Swan Guild.'

A rescue team had come to rescue us.

'We didn't lose her.'

'Rangers, please start tracking right away.'

We heard voices from all over the place and the elite rangers, which were the pride of the Black Swan Guild followed their guild master and disappeared. Not only did the priests immediately rush to us, but I saw the guild members busily moving around as well. They gathered around Jung Ha-Yan, who had passed out with a sword in her chest, and Ahn Ki-Mo, who had gotten stabbed in Kim Ye-Ri's place. The priests started to gather around Kim Ye-Ri as well, who might have actually fainted. Park Deok-Gu was still trying to figure out the situation when the support team suddenly appeared, but it didn't take long for him to come back to his senses. It was because an elite member of the Black Swan Guild started talking to him

"Mr. Park Deok-Gu of the Blue Guild? I'd like to ask a few questions regarding the accident."

"Wh-What?" Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

"You can rest now…" they assured him.

"H-How? What's going on?" he asked.

"We saw the distress signal," they replied.

"*Oh… oh…* a distress signal… What about hyung-nim? Are hyung-nim and noonim doing alright? What about Ye-Ri?" he asked.

"Our priests are currently taking care of them right now," they answered.

"C-Can I see—"

"We're currently in an emergency situation," they interrupted.

"I-I'm going to go with them. Together! Let go of me!" he screamed.

My body was being transported to a carriage against my will, and the carriage had to be bigger than I thought because Kim Ye-Ri, Ahn Ki-Mo, and Jung Ha-Yan entered the carriage one by one. The carriage looked like an ambulance, and this helped me realize that the Black Swan Guild's system was better than I had thought. When I discreetly opened my left eye, I saw Deok-Gu trying to get in the carriage we were in. To make things worse, his face was covered in tears and snot.

"*Gaaaaah*… hyung-nim…!" Park Deok-Gu cried out.

I guess he was releasing the tears he had been holding back because as the other actors and I entered the carriage, he extended his hand out into the air.

"*Gaaaaaah… hiccup…* noonim, don't die. If you die… no, I'll die with you! I'll go with you!" he screamed.

He must have realized that it was really over now because when the support group arrived, the brigade's villain ran away, and he could finally take a closer look at his dying comrades.

"Let me go! Hyung-nim! Hyung-nim! Say something. Anything! *Gaaah*…!" he yelled once more.

"Please don't do this, Mr. Park Deok-Gu. The patients are in critical condition, so they have to rest as much as possible!" the elite member informed him.

"*Gaaaaaah…* Please save my hyung-nim…" he begged.

"We'll do our best," they replied.

"Please save them. Please. *Gaah*… Ye-Ri! Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo!" Park Deok-Gu screamed.

"Please don't come near the carriage! They need rest!" one of the members informed him.

"*Gaaaaaaah*… You have to save them. Please…" he begged again.

"Alright, please trust us," they told him.

The way he cried was so sad that even I felt like crying. Outside, I heard the doctors and priests trying to calm him down, and despite their efforts, he didn't sound like he was calming down.

"*Hicuuup*…"

His crying was bothering me a lot.

"She might come back for the carriage, so I want you to focus on the safety of the carriage, Mr. Deok-Gu," a member requested.

Seeing him calm down after hearing that request made me think that he was a *really* responsible person.

I could still hear Park Deok-Gu sniffling outside, and when the carriage door closed, the four of us slowly got up. There was an indescribable emotion written on the other's faces.

'I know that feeling very well.'

It was interesting to see them feel the same emotion I had always felt on a regular basis. Ahn Ki-Mo looked proud as if he had successfully achieved something, but that was it. He felt ashamed when he saw Park Deok-Gu cry, which meant he felt somewhat guilty, but among us, Kim Ye-Ri looked the grimmest.

'She's awake all this time.'

She had definitely received the most shock of us all, as she felt an awful sense of guilt. When the four sinners looked at each other in silence, I heard Kim Ye-Ri speaking quietly.

"Next time. I don't want to do something like this. I feel like… trash."

"You did well… and… we succeeded," I told her.

It was difficult to tell everyone that they had done a good job because of the very serious air around us.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young…" Kim Ye-Ri suddenly said.

"Yeah?"

"We did the right thing, right?" she asked.

I nodded lightly, but I couldn't talk with a positive tone, as I could still hear Park Deok-Gu sobbing outside the carriage. I guess the innocent Kim Ye-Ri was still feeling guilty. When I spoke quietly toward her, I saw her nod.

"Sometimes in life; you have to do things you don't want to do."

"Okay… I understand…" she replied.

However, Kim Ye-Ri was still worried.

CHAPTER 205
G.T.O (1)

It had been close to a month since the hidden camera prank. After getting treated for about a week at the Black Swan Guild, I was moved to the Blue Guild and spent the rest of my time there. Naturally, Ahn Ki-Mo headed back to the Red Mercenary Guild after a week, and I couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed during that process.

'He would be a good member… '

He was a talented player who appeared when I thought it would be good to have someone who could play the role of a sub-healer as well as a sub-tanker. As a combat priest, his stats weren't that bad, but his nature was similar to mine, which was what I liked the most about him. It was natural for me to be greedy over him because not only was his stats good, but I knew very well it was going to be hard to find another passionate actor like him. The amusing part was that he told me he wanted to work with me again.

'My contract ends soon.'

Ahn Ki-Mo had asked whether I would be willing to take him since he had nowhere else to go once he left the Red Mercenary Guild. Obviously, I nodded in agreement. I was going to visit Cha Hee-Ra anyway, so the next time I visited the Red Mercenary Guild's Guild House, I thought it wouldn't be so bad to bring up Ahn Ki-Mo.

'It has been a while since I saw her.'

It wasn't that I hadn't seen her at all. When it was officially announced that the Murderer Clan had attacked Jung Ha-Yan, Kim Ye-Ri, and me, Cha Hee-Ra visited us to show the public. After exchanging a few conversations with her, she quickly left as if she was embarrassed, but it hadn't been so bad because we were able to talk to each other. During all of this, the Black Swan Guild announced that a seatholder of the empire's Eight Seats was attacked by the Murderer Clan, which prompted the Black Swan Guild to show off their influence in Lindel. This was something both Cha Hee-Ra and Kim Hyun-Sung had officially agreed upon.

Kim Hyun-Sung and the key members of the Blue Guild knew that all of this had been a hidden camera prank for Park Deok-Gu, but there wasn't a reason for them not to bring a big incident like this into politics. I was sure Lee Ji-Hye was behind this.

The three alliance guilds, Black Swan, Red Mercenary, and the Blue Guild, strengthened the city's defense and by using the city's security as an excuse, they exercised their influence within the city.

I trusted Lee Ji-Hye and Kim Hyun-Sung, so I didn't check the details in the report, but they had definitely thought that this incident could raise awareness to the city that was in a comfort zone because I saw them moving around actively. Naturally, Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild looked like she was looking forward to her meeting with Kim Hyun-Sung even more thanks to this incident, but according to Lee Ji-Hye, she couldn't create an opportunity for them to meet, so it was up to me to create that opportunity.

'I can already feel my head hurting… '

Even though it had always been my job to watch our lovely regressor's back, it was a bit complicated to get involved with his love life. When looking at the big picture, setting him up with Park Yeon-Joo would benefit both guilds, and since there wasn't a reason for me not to help, I didn't think it would be bad to plan something out once all this was done and over. Naturally, the Black Swan Guild's movements weren't limited to Park Yeon-Joo's personal greed. One of the conditions I had mentioned was the possibility of them selling the Dragon Breath Potion. We had openly discussed the offer, but they weren't that surprised that the offer was even made. However, since the potion could output a tremendous amount of firepower just by imbuing it with a bit of mana, they were begging me to franchise it to them.

Of course, I wasn't planning on selling the Dragon Breath Potion to the public. The production process was difficult and since only a limited number of potions could be made at a time, I couldn't mass produce it. Moreover, the potion had to be handmade. I could probably sell one or two, but I didn't like the idea of someone else stealing my work and making money off of it.

Anyway, if I wasn't careful with my actions considering the overall situation, I could cause a massive problem.

"*Hicuuuup… gaah…*"

The pig in front of me still hadn't gotten over that incident.

"I'm not in pain anymore, so stop crying, Deok-Gu. It's been a month since that incident," I told him.

"But—"

"*Tsk*. We just need to be more careful next time. It's not your fault. It was my fault this time," I interrupted him.

"It's not your fault, hyung-nim," Park Deok-Gu said.

"We should have moved more cautiously. If we had searched more thoroughly before we prepared to enter the dungeon, we wouldn't be here in the first place. Like what Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo had said, we had been overflowing with confidence," I explained.

"What… do you mean?" he asked.

"You know, the story he told about how players who have been here for over a year will become so confident that they go on dangerous expeditions. That story applies to me, too. I honestly didn't think anything would happen during the expedition, and even if something did happen, I was confident that we would be able to take care of it. If the Murderer Clan decided to attack us, I thought we would be able to take them on. This incident was a big lesson for me, and it means that we're back at the starting point because we had gained more than we lost. This applies to both of us," I answered.

"*Ah*…"

"How do you feel? Do you feel stronger than before? Have you tested your skills out?" I asked.

"Not really. All I did was spar with Miss Lee Sang-Hee and the bro a few times… they looked really satisfied, though… I honestly can't feel the difference. My body did get stronger, but… *Oh!* My endurance increased to 90 points!" Park Deok-Gu excitedly said.

"Really?"

"I'm still having a hard time using the sword, and even though I had gained a lot of

knowledge, I haven't fully understood them yet…" he added.

"Don't be so hasty, Deok-Gu," I said.

"*Oh…"*

"You're doing just fine right now, and you're actually strong. Honestly, you're doing better than I expected. The information in your head isn't going anywhere, so if you're consistent with your training, you'll obtain an even greater result. Also…" I paused.

"Hyung-nim…" Park Deok-Gu muttered.

"I'm sorry about this," I continued.

When I quietly placed the Enhancement Serum on the side table, he looked at it quietly.

"It wasn't because I had no trust in you," I added.

"*Oh…"*

Park Deok-Gu looked really touched. I was going to say something that was kind of embarrassing, but after seeing his expression, I thought it would be best not to do so because I was afraid he was going to hug me *really* tight. In the end, I had no choice but to keep the conversation short.

"As I said before, I trust you. Whatever I can do, you can do better, and that thought hasn't changed since the first time I met you… Anyway, congratulations, Deok-Gu," I said.

"Hyung-nim…" he mumbled.

"Alright, stop crying. I'm getting tired of it," I complained.

"*Hicuuup…* Ye-Ri," he muttered.

Seeing the tears fill up his eyes made me think that this attitude of his was going to last for another month. When I pushed him away, Park Deok-Gu tried to grab Kim Ye-Ri's arm, but of course, Kim Ye-Ri didn't let him. She was actually looking away from

him, and I guess it was because she was still feeling guilty.

'I can't look at him. Mr. Deok-Gu.'

She told me that before, so there was nothing more I could say.

"Ha-Yan noonim… *hicuuuup*…" Park Deok-Gu cried out.

"I-I'm really fine now. I'm healthy. I can even walk around now!" she told him.

Despite the fact that Jung Ha-Yan rarely felt regret about other people's problems, she looked as if she was embarrassed. Usually, they were fine, but whenever Park Deok-Gu asked them if they were okay while crying, they would all react the same way. Honestly, I was embarrassed to see him as well. But out of all of us, I was sure Ahn Ki-Mo was the only person who could really talk to Park Deok-Gu.

"But hyung-nim…"

I had no trouble moving around either, but since he kept following me around, I thought it would be best to just stay in my bed. No matter what kind of excuse I would give, I didn't think he would believe me, so I had no choice but to look at Sun Hee-Young.

"I'm fine, too. I've actually been taking care of my work here. Even Miss Hee-Young said I'm doing fine… Isn't that right?" I asked her.

"That's right. Physically, he's all healed up, and I don't see any side effects. His recovery was slower than the others due to his job, but there's nothing I can do about that," Sun Hee-Young explained.

"See?"

"He'll be able to go back to his normal life in a week," she added.

"Th-That's a relief…" Park Deok-Gu remarked.

"So please be considerate and let Mr. Ki-Young rest comfortably," she requested.

'Nice one, Sun Hee-Young.'

She perfectly understood that I wanted to be alone.

Park Deok-Gu cleared his throat a few times after hearing Sun Hee-Young's blunt request. Then, he left the room with Kim Ye-Ri and Jung Ha-Yan. Jung Ha-Yan looked like she didn't want to leave, but since they had things they had to talk about, this was the perfect chance for them to do that.

In the end, Sun Hee-Young and I were left alone in the room. Thinking about it now, it had been a while since we had been together like this. It wasn't awkward, but her flushed cheeks were really bothering me.

'At least she's a reasonable person.'

Honestly, I was grateful for the fact that she stayed at the Blue Guild.

The momentary silence bothered me, so I had no choice but to start talking while smiling, and naturally, it was about work.

"By the way, how's the tutorial dungeon?"

"*Oh*… the dungeon usually opens around this time, but… it's kind of late this time around," Sun Hee-Young answered.

"I see," I commented.

"I'm sure it'll open soon. I haven't been here for a long time, but they do open around this time," she continued.

"*Ahh*… Now that I think about it, you've been here for a long time, right?" I asked.

"Yes, but I wasn't doing any kind of production work at that time. When I think about how I was back then, it felt like I was dead," she replied.

"What?" I asked, astonished.

"This may sound a bit funny, but recently, I feel like I'm more alive when I take care of the guild tasks and do volunteer work out of sincerity. I'm always thinking about how the work I had been doing before was worthless, and it's all thanks to you, Mr. Ki-Young," she explained.

"*Hahaha*. I didn't do anything. It's all because you did well, Miss Hee-Young," I complimented her.

"No, I'm really grateful for what you had done. I also know why this recent incident occurred," she said.

"What do you mean?"

"You used Mr. Deok-Gu as an excuse to get rid of the murderers outside the city," Sun Hee-Young said.

'What kind of bullshit is that?'

I had never made a plan like that, but the crazy priest in front of me had definitely thought that her assumption was right. It was understandable for her to think that way because the citizens within the city were shouting that we shouldn't leave the Murderer Clan alone.

"I know I'm presumptuous by having this thought, so I apologize again, but… Mr. Ki-Young…!" she suddenly shouted.

'What is it now… '

I got worried when I saw Sun Hee-Young staring straight at me. Her cheeks were red and she placed one hand on her chest. It felt like her breathing had become a bit uneven, but she didn't look like she was feeling excited. Actually, it seemed like she was looking at me anxiously with a pinch of nervousness.

'Oh… '

I couldn't help but realize that she was sending me a signal. It was obvious what she was trying to say.

'Seriously? At a time like this?'

The way her lips moved made it seem like she was going to confess her feelings. I knew this crazy priest had feelings for me, but I had never imagined that she would make a move just like this because she had always been watching me from the back. Sun Hee-Young *did* try to make a move before, but she was more aggressive this time.

'She is pretty, though… '

There was a reason why she was known as the Saint of the Forsaken. Of course, her actions and character had also contributed to that title, but the biggest reason why she became known as a *saint* in Lindel was because of her appearance. Her hair came up to her shoulders, and she always wore a neat priest outfit. Her calm vibes had even made me think, '*so that's what a mature woman is like*.'

Since I was a man, I naturally felt attracted to her, and my heart raced when I saw her looking at me so seriously.

"Oppa!"

That was when the door slammed open. Jung Ha-Yan didn't knock and directly opened the door to my room.

"*Huh?*"

Sun Hee-Young and I hadn't made any physical contact, and even though Jung Ha-Yan had come in at the perfect time, I had never imagined that she would do something like this again after I scolded her about it last time. However, I was sure there was a reason behind her sudden intrusion because Jung Ha-Yan looked kind of excited. Instead of being mad at her, I calmly waited for her to talk, and I realized I wasn't wrong.

"The tutorial dungeon is open! The Red Mercenary Guild said they want to invite you as an instructor!" Jung Ha-Yan explained.

"That's interesting…" I remarked.

CHAPTER 206
G.T.O (2)

"Darling, I know you're still recovering, so I'm sorry for making you come all the way here," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"Stop teasing me. I'm sure you already know everything. By the way, I didn't think I'd be able to come back here… it feels different. Thanks for calling for me, noona," I told her.

"Right? Almost everyone that comes back here has the same reaction," she commented.

Cha Hee-Ra looked at me as if she had expected it. She was still the same Cha Hee-Ra that I knew. She still looked confident, and her eyes and red lips were still intimidating. The biggest part that stood out the most was her messy hair. I guess it had been a long time since we had seen each other because her hair was already down to her chest, and excluding the last time when I saw her briefly, this was the first time we saw each other face-to-face. I had an idea as to why she had been avoiding me all this time, so I didn't bother bringing up that incident, but it was surprising to see Cha Hee-Ra pretending as if nothing had happened.

'Maybe she's really trying to pretend like nothing had happened… '

That was a possibility, but based on her personality, I didn't think she was just going to let it pass so easily. Regardless of the reason, the damage Cha Hee-Ra had caused at Castle Rock was a huge mistake, and since I had been affected, I was sure I would get something out of it. Maybe the reason she called me here was to compensate me for what happened back then.

The Red Mercenary Guild was in charge of this tutorial dungeon and even though the Red Mercenary and the Blue Guild were allies, revealing the dungeon to me first was more like a special favor.

'She might even give me a few priority negotiation rights… '

I wasn't sure about that, but I couldn't help but think that I would benefit from this, as she had invited me here.

"*Ahem*. I'd like to hear the details, if you don't mind," I suggested.

"Sure. I was going to get right into it anyway. Have you had dinner yet?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"Not yet," I replied.

"Then, let's talk while eating. The conversation won't be that complicated anyway," she said.

"Okay…"

"Hey! Can you bring us something to eat? Bring us something simple. *Oh!* You know the dish we ate last time? Bring us that," she ordered.

"Okay, Guild Master," a member answered.

The Red Mercenary was definitely different. It was different from the time when the Blue Guild had been in charge of the tutorial dungeon. It was also interesting how unlike Lee Sang-Hee, who was the former guild master, Cha Hee-Ra herself didn't go out to greet the attack parties. It was here when I realized that when Lee Sang-Hee came out to greet Jung Ha-Yan and I—it was a once in a blue moon moment.

'She did say we cleared the dungeon the fastest… '

The meaning of *being unique* wasn't limited to that sentence alone.

It was hard to believe that the location I was in right now was the same location Lee Sang-Hee had used, and the training camp I saw outside the window had been completely decorated and was now waiting for the new recruits. As I stared out the window, the food Cha Hee-Ra had ordered finally arrived. I wasn't the type to enjoy food, so I wasn't all that interested, but the food was obviously of high quality.

'Even the food is unique… '

"Try this, darling. I tried it last time, and it was delicious," Cha Hee-Ra recommended.

“Oh, yeah?”

“Do you want some wine?” she asked.

“No, I don’t want any since I’m technically still a patient,” I answered.

“That’s kind of unfortunate. So, what do you think about this place?” she asked.

“Want my honest opinion?” I asked.

“Yeah…”

“I’m really surprised,” I told her.

“I want to hear the details,” she requested.

“I understand why people talk about the Red Mercenary Guild a lot. When I first arrived here, the Blue Guild looked pretty amazing, but your guild is on another level. Everything here is high-quality, and even the guild members are great… They all seem very energetic. People might think it’s the guild members that are getting trained, not the new recruits. You’re trying to show that off, right?” I asked.

“You’re right. The new recruits are important, but this event is only held once a year, so it’s a chance for us to show our guild’s strength to the other guilds. The transfer window will open up soon, and we can also discourage the recruiters of other guilds, so it’s a great opportunity,” Cha Hee-Ra explained.

“You have a bad habit,” I remarked.

“People who are at the top need to show off their powers once in a while, darling. If you don’t do that, foolish people will continue to challenge you,” she explained.

“I’m sure there isn’t a person in Lindel crazy enough to challenge you, noona,” I said.

“I’m not doing this because of the people in Lindel. This may not apply to the Japanese who are in Celia, but it may apply to the Taiwanese players in Dawan. As you can see, our guild went kind of overboard. Since we’re going to show off to everyone, we decided to go all out by replacing the members’ badges and equipment with new ones and starting the construction a few months in advance to replace the equipment at the training camp with new ones,” she added.

“Does that have to do something with you calling me here?” I asked.

“*Hm*… I guess you could say there’s somewhat of a connection. Being able to show that our alliance with the Blue Guild is strong is a good thing, but I have a different reason for calling you here,” she replied.

“*Hm*…”

“You already know, right?” she asked.

“I don’t know if my assumption is correct, but is it regarding the workers?” I asked.

‘That’s right,” she answered.

“I was worried that I was wrong…”

“I wasn’t all that interested in production work before you came, and to be honest, I was almost indifferent about it,” Cha Hee-Ra started.

“I understand that,” I said.

“Alchemists are usually recruited to a party when there’s no priest, but recruiting an alchemist is a pretty ridiculous thing to do. There’s no point in recruiting a non-combatant member when they can just buy potions. Alchemists can only join a party when that party doesn’t have a mage or a priest, and they have no other choice,” she continued.

“You’re being pretty blunt,” I told her.

“I’m not talking about you, darling. It’s the same thing for blacksmiths. There are already a lot of talented blacksmiths in the Holy Empire, so there’s no reason for people to go on adventures just to visit a rookie blacksmith. Other than that, I don’t even think that I need to mention the end of non-combatant and production-type jobs that the system is regulating. They can’t join guilds, and if they spend the night in the slums, they will end up getting killed,” she added.

“That’s until I came, right?” I asked.

“That’s correct. It had always been like that before you came. No one has shown how valuable a production-type job can be with the support of a guild and with enough

materials. Of course, that doesn't mean that other guilds haven't tried to invest in production-type jobs. Before you came, a few guilds tried to make it work, but they all failed," Cha Hee-Ra explained.

"I understand what you're talking about…"

"Considering the situation, I think the city has started to think what it would be like if they supported the production field," she added.

"That's a bit surprising," I remarked.

"Aside from you, some guy claiming to be a starlight or sunlight engraver appeared in a small village. I don't think he's that efficient, but it's one of the production facilities that has been receiving the support of a guild. The guild hasn't made a lot of profit with it, but the potential is there. I invited you here out of my personal greed, but the guild and the clan masters of the city had also made a request," she continued.

"*Hm*… so that's what happened," I mumbled.

"It doesn't matter if you ignore it, but I'm also in favor of increasing the quality of the city's production-type jobs. Even the empire seems like they want it to happen, so now you know," she added.

I completely understood what was going on.

Basically, everyone's expectations of the production field had increased because of me. Out of the potions I had made, the effects of the high-quality ones were so good that they provided a similar healing effect from a priest. People wouldn't usually use many high-quality potions because they were consumables, but a party going out on a hunt would usually carry a few with them.

Even though it was only for a moment, there was a production boom within Lindel, and a few guilds and clans continued to invest in the production field. In a situation like this, it was obvious what kind of request the guilds and clans had made to the Red Mercenary Guild. I was certain they had suggested adding a production course to their training. The guild could have simply ignored the request of a few guilds, but as the king reigning over Lindel, there were too many things the Red Mercenary Guild would have to worry about if they decided to ignore their people's pleas. It was understandable for Cha Hee-Ra to make this kind of decision because even the empire somewhat wanted it to happen as well.

'She's trying to be a wise king… '

Cha Hee-Ra wanted to use this opportunity to show her authority and mercy at the same time because that was what an ideal king was like.

"So they thought you would call for me if they continued to file requests to the Red Mercenary Guild. They're pretty smart…" I told her.

"I'm sure they visited the Blue Guild a few times as well. It was around the time when you were stuck in your laboratory. I'm sure many people bothered the guild and the receptionist must have received a lot of requests. They were being considerate by not directly going to you so that their lovely alchemist can focus on his research," she informed me.

"I'm grateful for that," I commented.

"How sweet. By the way, are you two dating?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"There are strange rumors and books going around the city…" she replied.

"They're false rumors," I interrupted her.

"That's a relief, but anyway, that's what happened. I did tell the guilds and clans not to worry, but if you don't want to do it, I won't force you," she spoke.

"No, it's not that I *don't* want to," I started.

"Is there a reason?" she asked.

"I'm in favor of increasing the quality of the production field itself," I said.

"That's a surprise…," she mumbled.

"Of course, not participating in this may be beneficial for me since I'm dominating the market, but that's not really the case. To be honest, a proper market hasn't been set up yet. I'm the only well-known seller, and my potions are pretty expensive. Basically, only those with money will use my potions," I continued.

"*Ohh*…"

"Poor parties and clans don't have the luxury to purchase my potions. The people dying by going out to hunt without priests wouldn't have been able to use my potion anyway, and that's why I created samples that are cheaper. However, that would cause issues with the brand's image. Moreover, using factories still wouldn't matter as the production of high-quality potions would still be more beneficial to me," I explained.

"*Hm*… I understand. So you need people to lay the foundation so that the market will be more active," she said.

"That's right. People aren't fond of potions because they're consumables. There could be people who had never drank potions, but those that had drunk it before didn't just drink it once and stopped. What do you think will happen if low-level players get good results after coming back from a hunt, and then they start to grow more and more? Don't you think they'll continue using the cheaper version of the potions they had been drinking? Their life's on the line, after all," I continued.

"Are you saying that it doesn't matter as long as it's made by Lee Ki-Young?" she asked.

"That's right. People here and on Earth like luxury goods, and buyers want a company they can trust. I'm not trying to show off, but I'm a unique alchemist, and while I'm alive, the chance of a competitor is zero. In many ways, it isn't that bad because of the reason I had mentioned just now: the city's welfare issue and my image. What I'm curious about is the profit I can get from all this. I'm sure they had offered something while making the request," I explained.

"Of course, you'll get something out of it. You'll receive personal compensation. The guilds and clans will give you gold, and they'll mark it as an education expense," Cha Hee-Ra responded.

"Nice!" I cheered.

"You like it?" she asked.

"I have a need for money recently. Will the Red Mercenary Guild give me anything?" I asked.

“Don’t you think you’re being too straightforward, darling?”.

“*Ahem*…”

Cha Hee-Ra knocked on the table as if she was expressing her sadness, but I wasn’t going to give a lecture for free.

“The Red Mercenary Guild will also compensate you, and I personally want to give you a few things. I was thinking about giving this to you even if you reject the offer. Also…” she started.

“Also?”

“I’m thinking about giving the Blue Guild a few priority negotiation rights,” she replied.

“How many?” I asked.

“Shouldn’t you ask how many parties there are before asking that?” she pointed out.

“*Oh,* you’re right,” I agreed.

“There are a total of 14 players that will conquer this tutorial dungeon, and we can give you five priority negotiation rights. That’s too many even for us, you know,” she emphasized.

“There are 14 people?” I asked.

“It’s normal to have *that* many people. Your party was just special. So… are you going to do it?” she asked.

“You’re not overdoing it, right noona?” I asked.

“I told you it’s too many even for us. But, this is also my way of apologizing, so don’t worry about it,” she assured.

“Apologizing for what I wonder…” I teased.

“Stop provoking me when you already know and stop looking at me with that kind of look on your face. Just hurry up and answer. Are you going to do it or not?” she asked

once again.

When I smiled brightly while looking at Cha Hee-Ra, she urged me to give her an answer. She was pretty cute and obviously, I already had an answer in mind.

CHAPTER 207
G.T.O (3)

'I should do it.'

It was the right thing to do objectively, and I had already decided to do it. However, it wasn't because of the five priority negotiation rights. Naturally, the priority negotiation rights would help us recruit attack parties faster than other guilds, and even if that wasn't the case, I actually wanted to ask Cha Hee-Ra if I could examine the recruits carefully. Knowing those with talent and those without was very advantageous for me if I was the first one who could look into them, as I could basically go on a treasure hunt. However, I was surprised by the people the Red Mercenary Guild had picked.

"Regardless of their parties, the new recruits are going to receive training. Of course, we'll focus more on the people our guild is recruiting, but that's all," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"Are you saying you're not going to give special treatment? Is that okay? Then what's the point of having the priority negotiation rights, noona?" I asked.

"You're talking to the Cha Hee-Ra, darling. Do you really think it's okay to give special treatments just to impress the new recruits that had just recently arrived? They should be the ones who should do their best to impress us, not the other way around," she replied.

"I guess you're right…" I agreed.

"During the last tutorial dungeon, your party was a special case, and since the Blue Guild was in a hurry, Lee Sang-Hee gave you guys special treatment. However, Guilds usually don't do that. Whether they're an attack group or a survival group, they all look like babies to me, and of course, it's better to train them before sending them off. I don't want people to say that we had done a horrible job at training the new recruits this year…" she explained.

"I didn't think you cared about that," I remarked.

"You know how much people cursed the Blue Guild last year, right?" she asked.

"What?" I asked.

"Since they were really busy trying to recruit your party, they did a poor job in training the new recruits… Naturally, they received more training once they went to their guilds and clans, but it was a mess overall. Since the new recruits didn't listen, they just went into the forest, which led to a high death rate, and the city became a laughingstock of the other cities. We don't want that to happen again now, do we?" she answered.

"Aaaah…"

"The Red Mercenary Guild has to be perfect all the time. That's the reason why I invited your girlfriend and Sun Hee-Young over…" she added.

"What? Really?" I asked.

"Since we're collaborating, we might as well go all out…"

After recalling the conversation we had a few days ago, I nodded. It was really just like Cha Hee-Ra to have even the attack team train together. Since I hadn't seen the attack team yet, I didn't know how strong they were, but seeing that the Red Mercenary Guild wasn't preparing for recruitment, I guess they weren't that talented. The guild was probably giving them benefits discreetly, but seeing them move without haste was definitely amusing.

'They're totally different from the Blue Guild from last year… '

They were completely different from Lee Sang-Hee, who had approached us desperately, but considering the situation at the time, I understood why she had acted that way. Moreover, Cha Hee-Ra's current attitude was so different from back then that she was like a different person.

The most surprising part was that she had invited Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young as instructors. I knew the mages and priests in the Red Mercenary Guild weren't that strong, but that didn't mean their squad was weak.

'They have members like Ahn Ki-Mo… '

Despite having skilled mages and priests, the fact that the guild had invited Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young meant that they wanted to end this tutorial dungeon training by collaborating with the Blue Guild. Thanks to that, both Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young were smiling. I guess they were enjoying it, not because they were with me, but because being an instructor was more enjoyable than they had thought. The training camp had just opened a few days ago, and since they were in charge of the main subject, Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young had already completed the first lesson.

It was natural for them to be curious about what happened to me, as I had been stuck since I took care of the incident. I felt happy seeing Jung Ha-Yan enjoy her food. The fact that she had found something she could focus on was good news for me. Sun Hee-Young had always enjoyed working, but the faint smile on her face showed that she was happy she accepted this job.

"You look like you're in a really good mood, Miss Hee-Young." I pointed out.

"Really? I just recalled something from long ago…" Sun Hee-Young replied.

"What?"

"I used to be a teacher, although it was just temporary…" she answered.

"Really?"

"Yes. I had to quit due to personal reasons, but doing something similar again feels refreshing," she replied.

'It suits her.'

I had just obtained a brand new piece of information about her, but for some reason, the profession really *did* suit her, and I automatically nodded at her answer. Of course, she was also suitable as a social worker or a volunteer with UNICEF, but the sight of her standing on a podium wearing glasses seemed to be even more suitable for her.

"When I was in elementary school, my dream was to be a teacher too, Oppa!" Jung Ha-Yan suddenly burst out.

"Really?" I asked.

'It doesn't really suit her... '

I just couldn't imagine Jung Ha-Yan being a teacher no matter how hard I tried.

"I'm sure… you would've done well…" I commented.

"You think so?" she asked.

"Of course. How was your class?" I asked.

"It was better than I thought, Oppa. *Hehe*…" she replied.

"Oh yeah?" I asked.

"Yeah. I'm not sure why people are confused, but many of them were trying their best," she answered.

"They were confused?" I questioned.

"Yes. No matter how much I explained it, they couldn't understand it. I tried to explain it as simply as I could, but it seemed like they were the ones who just couldn't understand. The majority of them were nice, though," she explained.

"How did you explain it to them?" I asked.

"I just told them to do this and that… Even when I told them to try to feel their mana, they couldn't do it," she replied.

I couldn't help but think that this wasn't going to work out. After all, there was a vast difference between how an ordinary person viewed the world and how Jung Ha-Yan viewed the world. No matter how hard they tried in class, I wasn't sure if even one percent of the class could understand her explanation. I felt relieved that Jung Ha-Yan wasn't the only magic instructor.

"Was it the same for you, Miss Hee-Young?" I asked.

"Yes, but it was expected. The attack team did manage to change to their first job, but there were many people in the survival team that hadn't changed to their first job yet. As such, it's only natural that they couldn't feel their mana or holy power," Sun Hee-Young explained.

"*Hm*…"

"Right now, we're not giving an in-depth lesson. It's more about learning the priest and mage jobs. Those that have potential will possibly change jobs during this process, and I think it's good that they'll be able to decide on their job path. That's probably the reason why the Red Mercenary Guild hasn't divided the classes just yet," she continued.

"So you're just giving them a taste," I said.

"That's right. Think of them as children and that we're just sending them to a piano school, taekwondo school, and English school so that they can give them a try. By the way, was today your first lesson?" she asked.

"Yes, but due to the nature of the job, I don't have that many lessons," I replied.

"Let's go together, Oppa! I have class, too. *Hehe*," Jung Ha-Yan suggested.

"Okay, let's do that. What about you, Miss Hee-Young?" I asked her.

"I don't have any more classes today. I'll see you after you're done, Mr. Ki-Young and Miss Ha-Yan," she answered.

"Okay."

Honestly, I wasn't that interested in the class because there was probably no one who could understand alchemy. I was sure they would receive proper lessons once the in-depth process started, but it was more important to search for slaves that would work hard for the Blue Guild. After spending time explaining what non-combatants and production alchemists were, all I had to do was explain the basics of Ramus Tucker's Introduction to Alchemy to those that had changed their jobs to Mage.

After looking at the time, I noticed that it was almost my turn, so I had no choice but to push aside my disappointment and stand up. After finishing my meal, I immediately started walking. The way I held Ramus Tucker's Introduction to Alchemy on one hand actually made me look like a legitimate instructor, and I thought I could finally understand why Jung Ha-Yan was excited to go to class.

"Which classroom are you in, Oppa?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“Room C,” I replied.

“*Ah*. I was in that class yesterday, and the kids there were really nice. The average age of that class is pretty young as well,” she said to me.

“*Oh* yeah?” I asked.

“Yeah, but the ratio of aspiring mages is pretty high, so everyone is pretty motivated. Now that I think about it, there were more girls in that class… *tsk*,” she commented.

“*Oh*, but don’t we look like a teacher couple, Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“Y-You’re right! *Hehehe*… I think so, too! *Hehe*…” Jung Ha-Yan agreed.

‘She’s in a better mood than I thought.’

The situation had almost turned dangerous, but it went way better than I thought.

This was my first time entering the training camp, and naturally, I saw people training in the practice room. Since the instructors training outside had greeted me lightly, I nodded back lightly because I wasn’t planning on staying here for long. I continued to look around, but nothing really caught my attention.

“I’m going this way, Oppa,” she told me.

“Okay, I’ll see you later,” I said.

“Okay!”

I guess Jung Ha-Yan was in charge of Class B, and as soon as she entered the quiet classroom, I heard a loud noise.

“Hello, instructor!” the students greeted.

“Hello, everyone. Let’s start class,” Jung Ha-Yan greeted back.

That voice wasn’t very Jung Ha-Yan-like. I couldn’t help but laugh when I heard her confident voice.

After some time had passed since the training camp’s opening, the new recruits

seemed to have adjusted well while hearing various explanations during the regulation process.

'The new recruits this year don't seem that bad.'

Unlike the Blue Guild, the Red Mercenary Guild had provided an organized system, so I already knew how things worked around here, and naturally, I had some expectations.

I passed by Class B and entered Class C.

"Don't you think Miss Sun Hee-Young is really pretty?" a player asked.

"*Uh*, I think Miss Jung Ha-Yan is prettier…" another commented.

"*Ah*, she is pretty… she's cute, too. It's my only joy in life here," they said.

"What's the point? I heard Miss Jung Ha-Yan has a boyfriend."

I heard voices from inside the classroom and what was kind of shocking was that even after I entered the classroom, the two male recruits were still talking. Of course, they sat down after seeing me, but I could no longer hear the loud voices from Jung Ha-Yan's classroom.

'Huh?'

It had been a while since I entered this room, but despite that, the atmosphere was still pretty loud, so I guess they hadn't gotten the memo on who I was. My way of thinking was old-fashioned, but I couldn't help but think that way. Some were lying down, while some were even smiling at me. It was ridiculous, but I was certain that they despised me. I felt like I could understand the sadness of an instructor responsible for teaching a minor subject, but of course, the emotions I was feeling were worse than that. It was because those babies looked at me as if they were different from me.

'Huh… '

I wanted to compliment them for already being able to distinguish between combat-type jobs and production-type jobs, but…

'They're messing with the wrong person… '

They said that when the situation became truly ridiculous, you wouldn't be able to speak. When I looked at them blankly, I heard a voice at the end of the classroom.

"Aren't you going to start the class? It's been five minutes. Do we just call you the non-combatant instructor?"

They were being rude to me.

CHAPTER 208
G.T.O (4)

'Huh…'

It was so absurd that I couldn't help but laugh because the players in front of me were obviously nothing but rookies. When I looked at the girl who told me what to do, I immediately saw her status window. I guess she was part of the attack team because she had unlocked her first job, but nothing about her stats really caught my attention.

'She's just going to get carried.'

Even in a party of 14 people, she had probably gotten carried by them, so there was no need to remember her name or face. She might show some potential if she actually tried, but if not, she would just be a rookie I wouldn't have any expectations for.

'Han Sora?'

When the small rookie with short hair spoke up again, it was so ridiculous I didn't know what to say.

"Sir?"

Naturally, I thought about what I should do. It would be stupid to trick them or introduce myself, and since I was somewhat a public figure, it would hurt my pride to come up with a plan to get rid of them. I could just use my power without having to use my brain like I had done with Ito Sota. Juliena was definitely reacting to my emotions because I could feel her trying to unsheathe herself from my waist. When I looked around slowly, the rookies must have thought they had insulted me, as I saw them smiling, and Jung Ha-Yan's earlier statement about them being nice was clearly false.

"Sir? Aren't you going to start the lesson?" one of them asked.

“I’m Lee Ki-Young, an instructor,” I told them.

“*Ohh*, I guess even people in charge of non-combatant jobs are considered instructors,” they commented.

I guess their comment was funny because I heard the others snicker. I wanted to just laugh it off, but I wasn’t that kind of person.

“*Whew*…”

The room became quiet after I sighed.

“Stop… sighing and start the…”

As soon as the words came out of their mouth, Juliena unsheathed herself from my waist and flew toward Han Sora. It was so sudden that I didn’t bother to react to her scream because Juliena had already flown over to her in an instant, the objects between her and me had strewn all over the place, and even the windows had started to crack. Juliena flew like she would cut Han Sora’s head off, but she stopped right in front of the latter’s eyes.

“*Um…”*

She couldn’t even respond. Her short hair flew back because of Juliena, and no one spoke even after her hair came back to place. However, Han Sora had *definitely* realized that she could have died just now because her chin started to quiver.

‘She peed herself… ’

She definitely got scared because I saw yellow liquid dripping under her desk. It seemed that intimidation was more fun than I thought.

“How amusing. What’s your name?” I asked.

“*Oh…”*

She looked like she was suffering from a stroke, as she couldn’t even speak properly. When Juliena approached her again, I heard her speak in a low voice.

“It’s… Han Sora…”

“Han Sora. Before I start the class, I think I need to give you some background because it seems like many of you are unsatisfied with this class,” I started.

“…”

“I can’t speak for everyone, but I’m sure some of the trainees will have this kind of doubt. You don’t have enough time to train, so why do you need to take a class about minor and production jobs? *Hm*… How about the trainee next to Han Sora answer?” I suggested.

“What?” they asked.

“You can answer honestly,” I added.

“Th-That’s not true. I never thought…”

“No, I told you it’s okay to be honest,” I emphasized.

“I-It’s a bit…”

“It’s natural to have that kind of thought. You’re not sure how this happened, but you’re suddenly in a situation where you have to fight against monsters, and you ended up here and have learned many things. It may be a bit soon for you to fully adapt, but I’m sure you already have a basic understanding of this place,” I continued.

“…”

“You’ll be treated with respect if you have power,” I added.

When I looked around after I finished talking, I saw how frustrated the rookies looked.

“I’m sure some of you are already feeling the gap because you all know that the attack team that completed the dungeon capture unbeknownst to you all is getting better treatment, and honestly, they deserve the treatment because it means they adapt really fast. That’s the kind of experienced rookies our society likes,” I explained.

“…”

“I may be getting off-topic here, but your answers are correct. In this place, you’ll be treated with respect if you have power. In this world, the few strong players will receive special benefits that can’t even be compared to the benefits ordinary players will receive, and the amount of money the strong players make is beyond your imagination. Do you know how big the difference is in terms of income?” I asked.

“I… don’t know,” a rookie answered.

“There are players who can’t even make one gold in a day, but there are players who make over a thousand gold a day. A monster’s corpse makes you money, and the higher the monster’s rank is, the more valuable they are. The same goes for higher-ranked dungeons. Capturing an epic-ranked dungeon or above basically means you’re going to obtain a lot of money. The problem is—” I paused.

“…”

“—The problem is that there aren’t *that* many players who are capable of capturing epic-ranked dungeons or above,” I continued.

My words must have slightly stoked the rookies’ interests, as I saw them staring at me.

“Yeah, there aren’t that many of them. Everyone started out just like all of you guys. They started with the feeling that they could achieve something, and they trained hard, thinking that they could do well. They started to hunt monsters, felt like they were growing, and they started to think that maybe this world wasn’t so bad. Just like playing a videogame, they enjoyed the grind to increase their levels, as well as the thrill of getting new gear,” I said.

“…”

“And then, they either got into an accident, or they started to notice their limits, and then they realized this wasn’t a game. They started to get divided between people with talent and those without. Those without talent became dispirited while looking up to the players continuously climbing the ranks. Some of you will realize this reality as soon as you leave this training camp because the outside world is more dangerous than you think. Why do you think there are only a few players who are climbing the ranks?” I asked.

I was sure they knew the answer.

“The majority of them die during that process. They had either gotten themselves eaten alive by a monster, or they had become disabled before being forced to live in the slums as beggars. For men, they’re often used in human experiments, and women are either sold to foreign lands as slaves, or they’ll end up getting involved in bad things. Living in this world is harder than you think,” I continued.

“…”

“The situations I mentioned aren’t that bad. There are people who get captured by monsters, and after getting fed shit in the monster’s village, they end up getting eaten, and there are many whose lives had been spared after having their limbs amputated,” I added.

Honestly, those situations weren’t that bad either because I was sure there were some players who had experienced far worse than those.

‘Of course, I’m not one of them… ’

“I’m sure some of you will end up in one of those situations. If you asked for my personal opinion, the majority of you will either die here within three years or become severely disabled and end up living in the slums. We might even run into each other at a bar. Especially trainees like Han Sora,” I added.

“What?” Han Sora asked, dumbfounded.

“People like you are usually the first ones to either die or end up disabled. Both situations are pretty bad, but the first to run wild is the first to meet their end because it’s a very common cliche,” I answered.

‘Ah… ’

“You and you… and you… and the trainee next to you… and the trainee over there… There’s a good chance you’re going to be killed somewhere. I can assure you; there isn’t a single person here who can climb… *Oh!* Aside from you,” I told them.

[Checking Player Yoo Ah-Young’s Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Yoo Ah-Young]

[Title - None. Please work harder.]

[Age - 21]

[Nature - Timid Optimist]

[Job - Unemployed]

[Stats]

[Strength - 11/Above epic rank growth limit]

[Agility - 10/Below rare growth limit]

[Stamina - 27/Above legendary growth limit]

[Intelligence - 10/Below average growth limit]

[Endurance - 12/Above rare growth limit]

[Luck - 15/Above epic growth limit]

[Magic - 01/Above rare growth limit]

[Overall Review - Player Yoo Ah-Young's stamina and strength potential are high. Her endurance and magic potential are disappointing, but she has the potential to grow into an excellent vanguard.]

'Not bad.'

I didn't think she was part of the attack group, but she was way better than I thought because this was my first time seeing someone who had legendary-ranked stamina. I was basically here to discover gems like her. It seemed like her huge chest was drawing my attention, but of course, it was rude to stare at her like that.

The girl was surprised when I suddenly pointed at her, and after turning my head away from her for a brief moment, I continued talking.

“Your name?” I asked.

“Y-Yoo Ah-Young, sir,” she answered.

Now that I thought about it, she wasn’t one of the trainees who mocked me. When I pointed her out, everyone looked at her. Everyone looked as if they were confused, but whether they understood or not was none of my concern.

When I continued talking after tapping on the desk, they looked at me again.

“Excluding Yoo Ah-Young, none of you have the potential to reach the top. None. Some of you might be able to, but I’m certain you’ll only get there by overcoming several life-threatening situations.”

“That’s…”

“The world has always been unfair. I’ll speak briefly about Miss Jung Ha-Yan. She’s one of the mages currently representing Lindel. She achieved high enough stats to get the Devil’s Guild’s attention, and she has more mages beneath her than above her. How long do you think it took her to achieve all of this?” I asked.

“*Ah…*”

“Only a year. It may not seem like much, but this is pretty abnormal. It applies even more when you think about the people in the city who can't even get close to her even after studying magic for over twenty years. Actually… considering the situation, I’ll be more straightforward,” I said.

“…”

“You guys are trash with no potential,” I remarked.

“*Ah…*”

“And that’s why I’m here. Now, do you understand why a non-combatant instructor is here? You’re going to die anyway if you go out there, so I’m here to save at least one of you by turning you into a useful component of society,” I added.

“Th-That’s quite…”

“It’s not harsh at all. Whether you go out to hunt monsters or to war, you’ll be nothing but meat shields. If you can’t contribute to the city, you might as well do some labor or create an alchemist kit and be helpful to the city. Don’t put your effort into useless things, you idiots, as time is precious. I guarantee that people like you are better off listening to my lessons than another instructor’s lesson,” I continued.

When I looked at the trainees after I finished talking, I noticed they were being hostile. They seemed like they had something to say, but they didn’t have the courage to say it, as Juliena was still floating in the air.

Just then, the bell signaling the end of the class rang, but I didn’t bother waiting for them to say goodbye.

“I’ll see you next time, you idiots,” I told them.

As soon as I exited, I saw Jung Ha-Yan waiting for me. Despite the fact that the students were watching us from the window, it was kind of amusing the way she stuck right next to me. Even the two male recruits who had been talking about her before class started were staring at us, and for some reason, it made me feel better.

“*Pwahaha*.”

“Did you have fun, Oppa?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“*Oh*… yeah, I did. It was more fun than I thought. The students were nice…” I replied.

“Right? Everyone in Class C was really nice,” she commented.

“Yeah, and for some reason, I couldn’t stop looking at a trainee named Han Sora…” I added.

“What?” she asked.

“She was passionate about the lesson…” I started.

“*Ah…*”

“She was cute…” I continued.

“I-I see…”

“I think she was part of the attack group, so it’ll be best to recruit her to the Blue Guild. I want her by my side,” I added.

“What? I-I mean, yes, that would be… *Oh*… I know her, too. She’s… yes… *hehe*… I remember her. She was cute. Yes… cute…” Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

I saw Jung Ha-Yan smiling awkwardly. Rather than blaming her for her actions, I was certain this method was more effective. I may seem pitiful, but a cowardly revenge like this was more of my style.

‘You need to be punished.’

CHAPTER 209
AN OMINOUS FEELING (1)

“That fox-looking tiny-eyed bastard is crazy!” I[1] yelled.

“Don’t cause trouble, Han Sora.”

“I’m really annoyed! He was talking as if he was high and mighty when he’s nothing but a potion-making alchemist! How dare he… he… discipline us?!” I screamed.

“I clearly warned you not to cause any trouble. We’re not in the tutorial dungeon anymore. We might’ve been kings in there, but here, we’re nothing but rookies. No matter what you think, it’s better to stay out of trouble as much as possible.”

“I know we’re rookies, but we’re rookies who received offers from large guilds.” I pointed out.

“Nothing has been finalized. Until we sign the contract, we don’t know what will happen. We may have gotten offers, but we still have the training and the demonstration. Not only that, but I also heard that some guilds have their own entrance tests, so don’t worry about anything else and just focus on the training. I do understand how you’re feeling, though…”

“You should know after hearing that bastard’s lesson, Oppa!” I shouted.

“I’m not sure. Even though I didn’t like him looking down on us, he didn’t seem all that bad as a person. He was being realistic, so I wasn’t offended by it. Of course, our class didn’t experience the oppressive atmosphere that your class experienced, but even the other instructors were showing their respect toward him…”

“It’s no surprise since he’s Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s boyfriend. It’s natural for them to treat him with respect,” I commented.

“Is that so?”

“Yup. That fox-looking, tiny-eyed bastard is Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s boyfriend, and I’m

sure she made that flying sword of his. She's a well-known mage in a large city, so I'm sure she has the ability to make him a sword. That cunning bastard. I'm sure his life improved because he got a great girlfriend," I answered.

"I don't know…"

"I can't just stand by, Oppa," I told him.

"I don't really care what you do, but just make sure you don't get us in trouble. For some reason, I have a bad feeling," he started.

"About what?" I asked.

"That guy named Lee Ki-Young. I tried to find information about him, but nothing came up, and even the instructors are keeping quiet about him," he replied.

"The instructors of the Red Mercenary Guild don't accept personal questions. I'm sure you're just misunderstanding it," I reassured him.

"I hope it's a misunderstanding… It seemed like they were intentionally trying not to leak any information about him, but whatever. You should try to look into him. I honestly don't have the energy to do something like that. Just thinking about the entrance test is giving me a headache," he said.

"*Geez,* you're the one that said we were always going to be together as one in the tutorial dungeon…" I mentioned.

"Situations are bound to change. Stop focusing on strange things and just worry about the entrance test or the demonstration. Everyone else has been busy because of that. It's time you grew up," he nagged.

"Forget it. I'll do it myself," I declared.

"Just don't cause us trouble," he reminded me.

"I know!" I exclaimed.

I couldn't help but be annoyed.

'Be one my ass… '

I guess it was my misunderstanding to think that the comrades I was with during the tutorial dungeon were going to help me. I honestly wasn't expecting much, but I had never imagined that they would react coldly like this.

'Everyone's dumb… '

Naturally, I felt frustrated because these idiots weren't taking advantage of this opportunity.

'Is there really a need to grovel like that?'

Of course, I understood that they wanted to join a large guild, but no matter how much I thought about it, there wasn't a need to grovel. It was ideal to have a stable start by getting support from the guild, but they weren't considering the treatment they were currently getting. The treatment the attack team was getting was different from the support team. It may not seem like a big difference on the outside, but it was undeniable and obvious that the attack team was receiving various benefits.

We were feeling anxious as well, but the guilds were trying their best to recruit us, and they had no choice but to recruit us. Unlike the survival group who couldn't adapt and had wasted their time by trembling in fear in the dungeon, we had put our lives on the line, and we ended up getting what we wanted. When considering the fact that the guilds and clans wanted to recruit stronger and more talented people, it was important to play hard to get. If we negotiated after the fourteen of us grouped up together, then we may receive an even better offer, as we were wanted by many.

'We're the ones in control!'

Idiots.

'Chang-Ryeol oppa said he wanted to join the Blue Guild… and I think Hye-Ja unnie wanted to join the Black Swan Guild… the rest wanted to join the Red Mercenary Guild or… Geez… '

If we had started the negotiations that the entire attack team claimed a guild, or that we wouldn't join a different guild, then it would have been much better than the current situation.

"Shit…"

My face turned red when I recalled how I peed myself. When I angrily opened and closed the classroom door, I saw people looking at me, and of course, a few of the girls started to approach me. I didn't really remember their names, but I was used to this kind of situation.

'So they want to make a good impression.'

It was because I was one of the privileged players.

"Unnie, did things work out well?" a girl asked.

"No, I don't think the guys are really interested this time. They're all preparing for the entrance test and demonstration… I'm getting really annoyed," I answered.

"Are they trying to join the Red Mercenary Guild?" they asked.

"Both the Red Mercenary and Blue Guild have entrance tests. The other guilds and clans have it too, but… *Oh!* You guys probably don't know yet," I said.

"Yeah, we haven't heard anything," they acknowledged.

"The Devil's Guild and the Black Swan Guild have one as well. And the conditions of the mid-sized guilds don't seem that bad either…" I explained.

"Which guild are you planning on joining?" they asked.

"I'm not sure… I did hint to the guys that I had received an offer from the Red Mercenary Guild, and I had received an offer from the Devil's Guild as well, so I don't know yet… I thought about the Blue Guild, too…" I replied.

"If you continue to grow as a mage, then the Blue Guild wouldn't be a bad choice either since Miss Jung Ha-Yan is part of that guild," they pointed out.

"I haven't met the executive members of the Blue Guild yet," I confessed.

"What? Really? I-Is it really because of him?" they questioned.

"Probably…" I mumbled.

This was another reason why that alchemist annoyed me.

“It was probably intentional, right?”

“I’m not sure, but it’s most likely,” I answered.

“I guess… he’s pretty influential within the guild,” one of them commented.

“Influential my ass…” I muttered.

“You know… Yoo Ah-Young, right?” a girl asked.

“Who’s Yoo Ah-Young?” I asked.

“The girl with the big chest…” she answered.

“*Ah*… I know her.”

“I may be wrong, but she has supposedly received an offer from the Blue Guild,” they continued.

“What?” I asked.

“She even had an interview with the guild master of the Blue Guild,” the girl added.

I couldn’t help but clench my fist because it felt like the fire inside me was growing bigger and bigger. It was ridiculous how she had received an offer from the Blue Guild while I had received nothing, as the only thing that idiot had done during the tutorial dungeon was run away, but I think I knew why this happened.

‘That bastard is trying to get back at me.’

The reason was probably that I acted rudely during our first meeting. It was so ridiculously obvious that he was trying to exclude me from the recruitment. I was certain that something *definitely* happened without my knowledge.

‘He should at least wear the guild’s badge. How annoying… ’

I couldn’t help but curse.

“*Ha*… shit. This is really ridiculous.”

“Seriously. If that really was the reason, don’t you think it’s really absurd? What’s so good about her that they’d want to recruit her… Her score wasn’t even that good. I think she did well in the stamina training, though…” the girl pointed out.

“Isn’t it obvious? They have dirty thoughts. Saying that he has influence over the guild is a bunch of bullshit, and the reason why Lee Ki-Young is acting all high and mighty here is all because of Miss Jung Ha-Yan… I’m sure it’s the same in the Blue Guild. He’s probably a major headache for the guild. Even if I get an offer from that guild, I’m going to decline it since it’s being controlled by that casanova,” I explained.

“You are?” a girl asked.

“…”

Of course, I was lying. The other large guilds weren’t bad, but if I were asked which guild I really wanted to join, I would choose the Blue Guild. I was sure I could learn a lot of things from the genius mage, Jung Ha-Yan, but the reason why I thought the Blue Guild was good was because of their background and its alliance with the Red Mercenary Guild. I was sure others had thought the same. Compared to being a member of the Red Mercenary Guild, it was more beneficial to join the Blue Guild, as it was still rising to the top and was steadily gaining power. Moreover, it was a mid-sized guild, so I was sure they would provide a more focused support to us rookies.

‘Everything’s messed up.’

I started to feel nervous at the thought that maybe Lee Ki-Young had told Miss Jung Ha-Yan about what had happened.

‘I have to do something… ’

That was when the classroom door suddenly opened, and of course, I turned my attention towards it. The girls around me went back to their seats, and I waited for the instructor in front of us to greet us. Miss Jung Ha-Yan came in to give her lesson. She was different from the other times when she greeted us as soon as she entered. Instead of looking at us, she spoke as soon as she entered.

“Please sit down. Let’s skip the greeting and start the lesson.”

“Okay.”

“Continuing from the last lesson, try writing using your mana. If you’re unable to feel your mana, please step aside,” Jung Ha-Yan instructed.

“Yes, ma’am,” the trainees answered.

“W-We don’t have a lot of time, so p-please move fast!” she exclaimed.

“O-Okay!”

I noticed that she had become colder than last time. I started to get worried because I noticed her looking at me without caring about the trainees sitting in their seats. She also looked like she was unwell because she seemed like she had lost some weight, which made me think that maybe something had happened. Seeing her acting annoyed made me think about that sly bastard, and I was sure the trainees here were thinking the same thing.

‘I’m sure he talked to her in a way that’s beneficial for him.’

They didn’t look good together, so I couldn’t understand how they ended up together, but that wasn’t important here.

As Jung Ha-Yan continued the lesson, she wasn’t openly expressing her anger, but she seemed like she was on edge because…

“Y-You’re a bunch of idiots… D-Do it properly!”

Or…

“I was able to do it on my first try… I already explained it to you… you really are an idiot.”

Or…

“Why can’t you understand this? How annoying… Everyone knows how to do this.”

And…

“You idiots. You’re all stupid… really stupid…”

…she was mumbling these to herself.

The peaceful lesson had turned into a nerve-racking one. I was flustered by how different the atmosphere was compared to the last one, and even the way she was teaching the lesson had become unfriendly. Considering the fact that a small number of people were still trying to feel their mana, there was no way they would understand the lesson properly when the lesson itself was difficult for even a mage like her. However, what bothered me the most was that the mage was looking at me. I wasn't sure why Jung Ha-Yan was looking at me, but her stare gave me goosebumps and for some reason, I started feeling desperate without realizing it.

I had never heard of or had done any training where you would use magic to write in the air, but I had to live up to her expectations, and I felt like I was barely keeping up with her lesson.

'I need to beat them with my skills.'

People with talent would eventually show themselves. If I did my best, people would eventually acknowledge my worth.

'This is nothing.'

I had to keep showing that I was special, so I could get special treatment. As such, I bit my lips and slowly materialized my mana to write in the air. I thought my mana was going to go away if I didn't stay on my toes, so when I focused on my mana while trembling, I noticed Miss Jung Ha-Yan slowly looking at me.

'Huh?'

I wasn't sure if I was seeing things, but she seemed annoyed. Actually, it was more like she was confused. I thought maybe I was doing it wrong, but I was still maintaining my mana. She seemed like she was thinking deeply about something.

'What is she thinking about?'

The room immediately became quiet, and I couldn't help but gulp. That was when I saw a surprised look on Jung Ha-Yan's face as the corner of her lips went up.

'Huuuh?'

I couldn't describe the emotions on her face as she smiled. I started to get goosebumps all over my body, and not only was I covered in cold sweat, but my chin

started to quiver as well. I had a bad feeling after seeing her grin, but the reason my body was acting strange was *definitely* not because of that grin.

'What's… going on… '

I might be seeing things, but Jung Ha-Yan's eyes looked weird. It was as if she couldn't understand something.

"*Um… ah…*"

"G-Good job, Han Sora," she complimented me.

"*Oh*… thank you," I said.

"You were better than the others here… It's a relief… that you're not an idiot…" she commented.

"Thank you," I repeated.

"I think you can start receiving lessons separately… *hehe*…" she giggled.

"*Oh*… I see…" I muttered.

"If you have time… can I teach you a few things after class is over?" she asked.

Naturally, I thought that maybe she had noticed my potential, and I was sure she hadn't made this offer to anyone. Not only was I happy, but I was proud. When I looked around, everyone looked at me enviously, and as expected, they were looking at me as if they had acknowledged that I was unique and that they longed for the same thing.

'Of course, I should accept.'

Obviously, nodding was the right thing to do because this was my chance to get tutored by a genius mage who would only appear once every few centuries. But for some reason, I couldn't give her my answer.

"I-I said that I'll teach you!" Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

I couldn't answer because when I looked up at her, a corner of her lips was twisted in

a bizarre direction.

“I…”

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1. Han Sora’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 210
AN OMINOUS FEELING (2)

'Thank you… '[1]

…Was what I should be saying.

I kept thinking that it was the answer, but for some reason, I couldn't say it. Losing out on an opportunity like this was a stupid thing to do and despite my brain knowing that, it felt like my body was rejecting it, so I started to panic.

'I need to accept.'

I kept repeating that in my head, but my lips betrayed me.

"I… well…"

"Yes?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"I-I actually have something to do… a-after class. I'm sorry," I replied.

"*Ah*…"

Jung Ha-Yan looked really disappointed and her dejected expression reminded me of a puppy that its owner had abandoned. I blamed myself only for a moment for making such a stupid decision. I thought about why my body was rejecting it, but I couldn't think of an answer. I was bothered by Miss Jung Ha-Yan mumbling something to herself, but I had no choice but to ignore it.

'I don't have a good feeling about this.'

I didn't think he would go that far, but it was possible that this was part of that sly bastard's trap because he was *definitely* a petty person. However…

'Keeping up with the lesson is hard enough.'

Learning something new was a good thing, but learning through homework and assignments was already giving me a headache. Even though I had come up with several reasons, the fact that I had made a stupid mistake was undeniable, but I didn't want to change my mind because I was starting to recover my breathing.

Just then, the bell signaling the end of the class rang, and Miss Jung Ha-Yan slowly exited the room while still mumbling to herself. She looked *really* sad, so I thought about grabbing and stopping her, but I didn't bother to raise my hand, as the other recruits in the room were approaching me.

"Y-You're really amazing, unnie…" a girl commented.

"*Ah…*"

"Who knew Miss Jung Ha-Yan would give that kind of lesson and give an offer like that?" another said.

"You… think so?" I asked.

"Yeah. Based on the mood of today's lesson, I think that alchemist said something to Miss Jung Ha-Yan… After seeing your skills, I guess she wanted to recruit you because she's an executive member of the Blue Guild. You might even receive an offer from them soon," they explained.

Another girl beside me continued the conversation.

"Sora unnie said she wasn't going to join, so it doesn't matter if she gets the offer or not. Didn't you see her instantly reject the instructor's tutoring offer?"

"Yeah… I did do that…" I commented.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan seemed a bit desperate, though…" a girl mentioned.

"Did she?"

"She also looked surprised…" the girl added.

"It was when Sora unnie succeeded, right?" another trainee asked.

I heard the other trainees talking amongst themselves, but I couldn't really hear

them because I kept thinking about the expression I had seen on Miss Jung Ha-Yan's face and the strange feeling I had. When I started talking, I noticed the trainees looking at me again.

"Hey…"

"Yes, Sora unnie?"

"Did you guys feel anything strange?" I asked.

"What do you mean?" they asked.

"About Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Didn't she seem a bit strange today?" I asked again.

"She did seem kind of out of it today and kind of angry too… It was like she was tired. At least that's what I felt…" one of them replied.

"She seemed… kind of slow-witted," another described.

The answers were different from what I wanted to hear. Another trainee beside me immediately started talking.

"Hey! Someone might hear you. *Pffft*. But you're not wrong though…"

"It's true! She did give off that vibe when I first saw her, but back then, I just thought that she stuttered a lot. I don't know if all geniuses are like her, but didn't it feel like she was disabled or something?"

"Are all geniuses like that?" another asked.

"If that's what it's like to be a genius, then I'm not envious at all. Aren't they just d-d-d-d-d-d-dumb?" a trainee mocked.

"Oh my gosh! Your imitation is perfect! Do it again."

"A-All of you are i-idiots! I-I don't understand why you're all so stupid… *pffft*. I guess she doesn't know that she looks stupid when she talks like that," a trainee said.

"That's hilarious!" a girl commented.

“Since she’s kind of slow-witted, I’m sure that’s the reason why she’s dating a guy like that alchemist. From the people I know, there’s always a person like that. You know, the people that have trouble communicating with others. People who didn’t grow up in a proper family would usually end up like her. I’m sure she has a few traumas,” a trainee explained.

“That’s kind of harsh, but it’s still funny, though. You don’t really think she’s disabled do you?” one of them asked.

“Who knows? She might’ve been normal, but she became crazy after studying magic too much… Don’t you agree, Sora unnie?” a trainee asked.

‘Maybe I thought too seriously about it.’

Seeing the other trainees talking and laughing as if it wasn’t a big deal made me feel stupid for thinking about it so seriously.

‘I guess she just wasn’t feeling well.’

No one thought there was something off about her, and thinking about it now, Jung Ha-Yan *did* seem sick. The way she kept grinning and stuttered was funny now that I thought about it. Seeing the other trainees imitating her made me laugh without realizing it, so I guess it wasn’t such a big deal.

‘She really did seem slow-witted… ’

I continued the conversation while thinking that they could be right.

“Who knows? It’s definitely a possibility, and it’s like that in the movies, too. The people that are kind of crazy and people with autism supposedly have a really good memory. I’m sure it’s the same case for magic. It seems like Miss Jung Ha-Yan has an innate affinity with magic, though…”

“Really?” one of them asked.

“Maybe she really is crazy. *Haha*. There are some people that are suffering from aphasia because of the trauma they had received from the tutorial dungeon. Maybe she’s the same case,” I commented.

“You’re finally smiling, unnie. You looked so serious earlier,” a girl pointed out.

“It’s because your comments are really funny, and I am actually thinking the same. Slow-witted. *Hahaha*. Thinking that Miss Jung Ha-Yan may actually be slow-witted makes me feel stupid for looking up to her. What’s the point of being a genius when you’re stuttering all the time?” I said.

“You’re right, unnie. Even if you’re on the same level, I’m sure the guild would want a person that’s not crazy or can at least speak properly,” a girl agreed.

“You have a point. Maybe I should join the Blue Guild and take over. There isn’t anything that says that I’m not a genius, and once I grow strong enough, the guild will want me more than that stuttering idiot since the Guild Master shouldn’t be an idiot.” I pointed out.

“I’m sure you can do it. If that happens, you better not forget about us,” they joked.

“How could I? Even if you join a different guild, let’s all keep in touch. Hey, if the Guild Master takes a liking to me, then I could even request to bring you guys into the party,” I suggested.

“You’ll do that?” they asked.

“I’m sure it’s possible. The Blue Guild isn’t a large guild anyway…” I replied.

“I really hope that happens because they’re definitely different from other large guilds. If you have power… It makes sense considering what that alchemist has been doing up until now. If you do join the Blue Guild, what are you going to do about him?” a girl asked.

“A member like him shouldn’t exist in the guild I’m going to join. He’s nothing but Jung Ha-Yan’s sidekick, so it’ll be over once they break up…” I answered.

“You’re going to break them up right now?” they asked.

“Ruining the life of a person with a production-type job is easy. What is he going to do when I report that I was sexually harassed? Miss Jung Ha-Yan, no—that slow-witted idiot will stop liking him and since he has been a thorn in the guild’s side, they’ll take this chance and throw him out. Wouldn’t it be beneficial if I pretended to be the victim for a little bit and receive support from the guild?” I asked.

“You’re going to go that far? Wait, if someone hears you…”

“Don’t worry. I sealed the room with mana ever since you started calling her slow-witted,” I assured them.

“Wow…”

“This place has nothing, so I need to at least do this to survive. Skills are important, but you sometimes need knowledge to live life the easy way,” I told them.

“I feel like you’re really going to succeed, unnie…” a girl remarked.

“It’s usually better to do whatever it takes to get what you want because being a weak woman is an amazing weapon in society,” I added.

“I feel like I just learned something today,” another commented.

“Unnie, I think someone is here to see you.”

“Who is it?” I asked.

Right when I was thinking that it wouldn't be so bad to take my sidekicks with me, I turned back and noticed a man waving his hand quietly.

‘Chang-Ryeol oppa?’

Out of the people on the attack team, I felt a bit uncomfortable around him because he wasn’t talking much anymore, and he started to become quite cold. I wasn’t sure why he came to see me, and because I couldn’t read his expression, it was difficult to guess.

“I’ll be right back,” I told the girls.

“Okay, unnie.”

Obviously, I started walking toward him. Unlike the sidekicks who had helped me temporarily get rid of my boredom, the man in front of me was kind of an important person.

‘Why is he wearing a mask?’

I still couldn’t understand him, but I didn’t show it. When I quietly approached, he

spoke first.

“Let’s talk.”

“What’s wrong, oppa? *Oh!* Didn’t you say you recently met with the Guild Master of the Blue Guild?” I asked.

“…”

“Do they have an entrance test, too? Did they confirm that you’re going to join them? How much did they offer you? You *did* negotiate the offer, right?” I asked.

“…”

“Our worth should be decided by us, not them. If you negotiate well, they can increase your pay…”

“Just shut up because I’m not here to talk about that, and lower your voice,” Chang-Ryeol warned.

“Fine. What is it about?” I asked.

“Honestly, I don’t like you…” he started.

“That’s a relief because I don’t like you either,” I retaliated.

“But that doesn’t mean I hate you because we had spent some time together in the attack team, and we *did* go through some stuff in the tutorial dungeon…” he continued.

“Stop talking about that and get to the point,” I demanded.

“I’m not sure what your plan is from now on, but don’t get involved with the Blue Guild and just live a quiet life,” he answered.

“What? This is so sudden,” I commented.

“This is a warning. Don’t do anything stupid and just quietly think about yourself. Don’t try to pull the same bullshit you pulled in the dungeon,” he warned.

“What? What did I do in—”

“You think I don’t know? You’re too greedy,” he pointed out.

“Stop talking nonsense and tell me something useful…” I asked.

“This is all I can tell you. I don’t want to be deeply involved with you, and I don’t want people to think that I can’t keep a secret. Honestly, I feel uncomfortable telling you this right now and it’s annoying,” Chang-Ryeol confessed.

“What do you know?” I questioned.

“This is the information I’m going to give you. Stay quiet,” he repeated.

“Wait, don’t be like that… Have you agreed to join the Blue Guild?” I asked again.

“I’m leaving. I gave you a clear warning,” he said.

“What? Chang-Ryeol oppa!” I yelled.

After he was done talking, he wore his mask again and started to walk away. It was a short conversation, but there was an unpleasant feeling inside me.

‘If there was something he wanted to say, he should have just said it.’

I was annoyed because he spoke vaguely and just ordered me to listen to him. Not only did I frown, but I started talking to myself.

“That idiot. If you’re going to give me intel, be clear about it. I never asked for that kind of information.”

When I went back to my sidekicks, I noticed they were still talking, and I was sure they didn’t notice I was coming back, as they were busy talking loudly to each other. I became curious as to whether they were talking behind my back, so when I focused my mana on my ear, their voices became clearer, and obviously, they weren’t talking shit.

“But do you think unnie can really join the Blue Guild? Didn’t she miss her chance when she rejected slow-witted Ha-Yan’s offer?” a girl asked.

“I don’t think so. Even if that were the case, if her plan works out, then it’s almost certain she’ll join the guild and it’ll be like she’s getting revenge on that stupid alchemist. Him and his useless production job…” another spoke.

“If unnie joins the Blue Guild, will we get the chance to join them, too?” they asked.

“I’m not sure, but I’m sure unnie will take care of us. And since that slow-witted Ha-Yan has taken a liking to our unnie, it’s likely that she still hasn’t given up on her.”

“Why do you think that?”

“She kept mumbling to herself as she was leaving the room earlier.”

“Really? I didn’t hear anything…”

“What did she say? She said…”

“…”

“…”

“…”

“I-I-It’s okay… I-I still have a lot of chances… I can do it.”

“Your imitation of her is so funny…”

“I almost couldn’t stop myself from laughing…”

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1. Han Sora’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 211
AN OMINOUS FEELING (3)

'Yoo Ah-Young… '

Obviously, she was the first person I[1] wanted to recruit. Even though she still didn't have a job and her attribute was locked, the potential of her strength was epic-ranked, and her stamina was legendary-ranked. Even though I didn't like her nature as a vanguard, if we recruited her to the Blue Guild and focused on her training, I was sure she would do just fine.

'She's a bit passive, though… '

Since there were a lot of trainees, there was a variety of natures, and I could divide them into three categories.

1. People who move on their own.

The majority of the people in the attack group were in this category. They knew very well what they had to do and what was going to happen. They were the types of people who would work hard without anyone having to tell them. Outside of classes and scheduled training, they were constantly active.

2. People who do what they were told.

They had the highest percentage in terms of ratio. They attend lessons, training, and they even worry about their future. However, after they were done with their lessons and training, they wouldn't put any more effort into their growth.

3. People who just eat away.

There wasn't even a need for me to mention this group of trash. They had no passion or results; all they did was eat away at the training camp.

I was certain that after the training ended, they would either end up in the slums or they would have to worry about getting food for their survival.

'Ugh… '

To be exact, Yoo Ah-Young was somewhere between the second and third group of people. Even though it seemed like she wasn't really passionate, she was able to keep up with the lessons, and as if to show off her legendary-ranked stamina, her training results weren't that bad. Honestly, if she didn't have potential, I wouldn't be interested in her at all. It was important to have potential one way or another.

It had been over a year since I joined Kim Hyun-Sung's party, and there was a thought that crossed my mind from time to time whenever I checked other people's potential and status window.

'It's surprisingly common.'

Surprisingly, there were a lot more people who had legendary-ranked potential, so of course, it was natural for me to think that it was common. On Kim Hyun-Sung's party, Park Deok-Gu and I were the only ones without a hidden potential, but the people I had met so far often had something special in their stats. If a player didn't have a special potential, they usually had special attribute and jobs, so it was understandable for people to have high standards. When I looked around after reaching the training camp, I noticed that not many people had legendary-ranked stats.

'Now that I think about it, I don't think Jo Hye-Jin had a legendary-ranked stat either.'

Having epic-ranked stats was more than enough to become strong, and even though there was a big difference between above epic and below epic stats, a player could still reach 90 points just by having an epic-ranked stat.

'In that sense, I don't think my stats are bad.'

Anyway, the important thing was that Yoo Ah-Young had potential. Even though she lacked passion, I wanted to applaud her for attending every class and being able to keep up. I was sure her surroundings were helping her as well because she seemed like an outcast in Class C.

'It's probably because of me… '

Jealousy made people look disgraceful, and even before I gave her my attention, I was sure that no one really cared about her, so it became painfully obvious when

everyone was being hostile to her.

While I was deep in my thoughts, I heard Sun Hee-Young's voice.

"I think we're almost done confirming the new recruit."

"Are you referring to Miss Yoo Ah-Young?" I asked.

"No, someone else," she replied.

"Lee Chang-Ryeol?" I asked.

"Yes, and I think Mr Hyun-Sung has already made up his mind even though he seemed uncertain of him at first…" she answered.

"By the way, didn't he duel with Ye-Ri?" I asked her.

"He did, and the result was pretty good. Mr. Hyun-Sung liked the fact that the new recruit wanted to become an assassin, and he also had a natural talent for fighting," Sun Hee-Young said.

"Have you seen him?" I questioned.

"I have. They needed a witness in case of an emergency… I don't know much about melee combat, but Lee Chang-Ryeol seemed pretty desperate. As soon as the match started, he threw the sand he had in his hand, and he didn't hesitate to attack Ye-Ri's vital points, which surprised her a bit. I think he was also hiding a poisoned needle in his mouth… I think that's why he was wearing a mask, but anyway, it was pretty impressive," she explained.

"*Ahh…*"

Aside from Yoo Ah-Young, we also wanted to recruit an archer named Lee Chang-Ryeol.

'His potential didn't seem that great… '

His agility was above epic rank, strength was below epic, and his intelligence was above epic, but his remaining stats were bad. Despite that, the reason why I used a priority negotiation right on him was that he trained to specialize in close combat

after he had changed his job to an archer. It impressed me that he was thinking about changing to an assassin job, which was a higher-ranked job than an archer. Having a clear goal was helpful. I wasn't sure whether he had good battle capabilities or not since I still hadn't seen him myself, but…

'He has guts. He had basically revealed everything about himself while the Guild Master was watching… '

It would be difficult for an ordinary person to perform nasty tricks like throwing sand in a situation where you were being tested. Moreover, it was possible that he had been testing us as well.

'This is my style. So what?'

This was probably what he wanted to tell us.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the type of person to care about things like that. He described Lee Chang-Ryeol's abilities as gifted, so he would fit right in with the guild. Even though we hadn't officially created the contract yet, he was no different from a junior guild member because I heard that he even ate with Kim Hyun-Sung before.

"Things are going great," I remarked.

"Do you have three more negotiation rights left?" Sun Hee-Young asked.

"I do. Other than those two, no one else has really caught my attention, so I've been saving it…" I replied.

"If you consider the fact that the demonstration is coming up soon…"

"Finding a recruit is difficult," I said, finishing her sentence.

For this recruitment, we were trying to create the guild's second party, but the problem was how we were going to create that party besides having Yoo Ah-Young and Lee Chang-Ryeol. If we added the battle priest Ahn Ki-Mo into party two, the vanguard would be all set, but the rearguard was currently too weak.

'We can't just recruit anyone.'

Quality over quantity, and since our lovely regressor was the one who had requested

it, I had no choice but to keep thinking about it. There were people who seemed capable, but there were many where I questioned if it was even worth recruiting them. Joining the Blue Guild meant that they were going to receive a lot of benefits, so I had no choice but to be careful about who I recruited. That was the reason why Sun Hee-Young and I had been busy recently, as Jung Ha-Yan didn't want to get involved in the guild's internal affairs.

"Miss Hee-Young, I would like to read the attack group document one more time… *Oh*, you can read it first," I told her.

"No, go ahead. I was going to head out anyway. I have other business to take care of today," she said.

"Okay."

After handing me the document she was reading, Sun Hee-Young bowed and walked out. After I bowed back, I started to read the document that contained the attack's team profile and grade. Not only did I have to check them with Mind's Eye, but I also had to see the progress they had made in the training camp. When I turned the page, I noticed a familiar name.

Han Sora.

After speaking to Jung Ha-Yan about her, I didn't pay much attention to her anymore.

'Her grades aren't that bad, and she has been keeping up with her classes… '

I felt this while teaching, but she seemed decent. Even though I had spoken a bit harshly back then, I was sure there was a reason behind her being part of the attack group. I was sure that she would eventually reach her limits, but as the mage ratio was small, I was sure mid-sized to large guilds would want to recruit her. The Red Mercenary Guild seemed like they were interested in her, but I didn't bother stopping them because there wasn't a need for me to get into a conflict with her like I had done with Ito Sota and the old man, Lee Seol-Ho.

'She's going to fail sooner or later anyway… '

That was when I heard a knock.

"Come in," I said.

As soon as I answered, I saw the person entering the temporary office.

“What do you want?” I blurted.

I couldn’t help but talk like that because Han Sora was looking at me with a small smile.

‘Speak of the devil… ’

It was annoying how she was looking at me confidently. I wasn’t sure what she was thinking, but she looked as if she had some kind of trick up her sleeve.

“You must be curious as to why I’m here,” she started.

I wasn’t really curious because there was only one reason a trainee would be here.

“Do you have an interview with the Red Mercenary Guild?” I asked.

“That’s right,” she replied.

“Trainees aren’t allowed here, so I suggest you leave,” I warned her.

I waved my hand without looking at her, but after hearing what she said, I had no choice but to look at her.

“I came because there’s something I need to tell you. To be exact, I want to make an offer. *Oh!* Before we get to that, I want to apologize for my rude behavior earlier,” she started.

“…”

When I moved my finger, Juliena quietly floated in the air, which made Han Sora flinch.

“I wouldn’t threaten a trainee if I were you since it’s no use anyway. Instructors aren’t allowed to hurt the trainees, right?” she asked.

“It’s not set in stone, so I suggest you leave,” I repeated.

“I have information that may be helpful,” she insisted.

"*Whew*…"

"I want to join the Blue Guild," she confessed.

'So what?'

"This information will be useful to you. I thought about it a lot, and I don't think it's a bad idea to start out from the Blue Guild. If you give me a good offer, I'm willing to join," she added.

I wasn't sure why she was so confident, but she was pretty arrogant. She was *definitely* thinking that I was going to laugh it off and offer her a contract.

"I don't think it's a bad offer for the guild either. Mages are pretty rare, right?" Han Sora asked.

"You're not qualified, and a negotiation can only happen if both parties make an offer of their own. I like the word negotiation, but there's obviously nothing you can offer me," I retorted.

"Are you sure? I'm not sure who's the unqualified one here… You must think you're all high and mighty just because you have Miss Jung Ha-Yan by your side," she spoke.

'Crazy bitch.'

"And you're totally wrong. I came here to negotiate, and I'm sure you're interested in this offer," she continued.

"What can you give me?" I asked.

"Your reputation and everything else," she replied.

"What the hell are you talking about?" I questioned.

As soon as I finished talking, I saw her tearing her clothes off all of a sudden. It was a nice sight, but I couldn't understand why she was acting this way.

'She's actually crazy… '

I wasn't sure if this was how Cha Hee-Ra felt when I first visited her, but the woman

in front of me didn't seem reasonable at all.

"I think we can have a proper conversation now… What do you think?" Han Sora asked.

It was amusing seeing her looking down at me by lifting her chin. I wasn't sure how she had come to this conclusion, but I can't believe a sex scandal was the best she could come up with…

'Should I kill her?'

It might be a bit annoying, but I was confident enough to fix it. My opponent was a trainee who had nothing, and it would be easy to manipulate the public's opinion. Of course, it wouldn't be easy to cover up the fact that an instructor had murdered a trainee right before the demonstration, but I couldn't hold back because her face was annoying.

Just then, I heard a voice outside as they knocked.

"Oppa, can I come in?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

Jung Ha-Yan appeared at the right time. Actually, it was possible that she had also calculated Jung Ha-Yan's arrival.

Han Sora looked elated.

"I don't want to show her my blushing face either, but it sounds like Miss Jung Ha-Yan is going to come in soon. Will you be okay?" she asked arrogantly.

If Jung Ha-Yan came in, she would be in danger, not me.

"You don't want to lose all of your hard work, right? It won't look good when an instructor who has a girlfriend calls a trainee to his office and then gets accused of sexual harassment… It'll be bad if this creates a problem with Miss Jung Ha-Yan…" she added.

"Crazy bitch," I commented.

"Appreciate the compliment, sir. I hear that a lot," Han Sora said.

I didn't think she understood what I meant by that.

I suddenly became exhausted. I realized what I was doing when I thought about arguing with a girl like her.

'What the hell am I doing with a girl like her... '

"*Whew*..."

"You don't have to worry. If you take care of the entrance test, I'll pretend like this never happened," she said.

"There's a cape in the closet next to you. Wear that and leave quietly, then I'll pretend like this never happened," I suggested.

"What?" she asked.

"You're a dumb bitch who thinks she's smart. I feel so pathetic for thinking about playing along, so just leave... You'll at least get something out of it," I answered.

"Is it really okay for me to just leave? You're going to regret it. Don't you hear Miss Jung Ha-Yan's voice outside?" she warned.

"Just talking to you is annoying me, so just leave. I'm busy," I repeated myself.

"You missed your chance," she said.

"I gave you a chance, too. You're the one who made the choice," I clarified.

Han Sora bit her lips. She was *definitely* thinking that I was still bluffing because she still hadn't realized what was going on. I guess she felt hesitant about getting the cape from the closet because she ended up not grabbing it. When reality hit me, I felt pathetic, and it was on a whim that I told her to wear the cape.

'I don't want to see Ha-Yan cry... '

Honestly, this was a good reason because I wasn't a total piece of trash. I was sure Han Sora's life would be ruined, and it was amusing how she opened the door after ignoring my advice.

"*Oh*… oppa!" Jung Ha-Yan called out.

What Jung Ha-Yan saw was Han Sora standing there half naked.

"*Uh…*"

It had been a while since I saw a frown on Jung Ha-Yan's face.

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1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 212
AN OMINOUS FEELING (4)

The last time I saw that expression was when we were at the Cursed Shrine. I flinched without realizing it, but it wasn't a big deal because I knew better than anyone that Jung Ha-Yan had changed compared to back then. She hadn't killed anyone recently, and she had been trying her best to prevent herself from doing things I wouldn't like, so of course, she had been *really* calm lately. I was almost certain that she wasn't going to harm me.

Anyway, after seeing Han Sora, Jung Ha-Yan was *definitely* shocked to see her because she stared at her, and then I saw tears rolling down her cheeks. The surprise caused her to hiccup, which I found to be surprisingly cute.

"*Hic… cup… hiccup*."

'I'll comfort her later.'

Jung Ha-Yan looked cute to the point that I started questioning if I really wasn't sadistic. I wasn't sure what she was thinking as she was crying, but Han Sora looked pretty happy because she was thinking that everything was going according to her plan. I knew that dumb woman's script was pretty simple. I was sure her silly plan was to get me kicked out of the guild by using sexual assault as an excuse, and then she would enter the Blue Guild after re-negotiating her offer, but that wasn't going to work.

'Nice try, though… '

Han Sora had simply picked the wrong opponent. I knew where she had gotten the idea from because the owners of large corporations on Earth frequently suffered from sexual harassment. Unfortunately, this wasn't Earth. I wasn't the owner of a large corporation, and I wasn't some celebrity who lived off other people's attention.

"*Hiccup… hiccup…*"

Jung Ha-Yan looked frustrated, but I guess she must have remembered how I scolded

her when she found me on the same bed as Kasugano Yuno because she was hesitating. She thought I was going to scold her again. In the end, she dropped her head and ran away.

'I should compliment her for that.'

I guess the scolding I gave her during the Kasugano Yuno incident was effective.

Since Jung Ha-Yan showed that kind of reaction, the stupid woman in front of me naturally looked back at me.

"I told you that you were going to regret it, right? Who's going to protect you now?" she asked.

"…"

"I'll make sure you realize that you messed with the wrong person and just know that I didn't want to go this far," she added.

"Alright, just leave already," I told her.

"I'm going to go after Miss Jung Ha-Yan," she informed me.

"Do whatever you want," I commented.

"I'm going to run to her and tell her that you sexually assaulted me, and then I'm going to tell the instructors of the Red Mercenary Guild," she continued.

"You've been told that you're not good at reading the room, right?" I asked.

"That's something I wanted to ask you. Anyway, you can struggle all you want."

"Okay, and since you're visiting Ha-Yan, tell her she can do whatever she wants," I requested.

"Still arrogant until the end…" Han Sora commented.

"I'm busy, so leave already," I told her again.

Her acting wasn't so bad because she immediately pretended she was crying after

that sly smile. Compared to Ahn Ki-Mo, her acting skill wasn't that great, but it still wasn't bad.

'I'll give her 70 points… '

After slamming the door closed, I heard her running somewhere. I had a lot on my plate, so I was annoyed that she had wasted my precious time, but I didn't think too deeply about it, as Han Sora had said she was going to visit Jung Ha-Yan.

'Now that I think about it, the plan wasn't that bad.'

If her opponent were an ordinary instructor of another guild instead of me, then I would have applauded her for her plan. It was a bit dirty how she had planned it around the time Jung Ha-Yan finished her class, but I guess she was only able to come up with this plan because she was going to pretend as a victim.

'She was daring as well… '

If her opponent was an ordinary instructor of a mid-sized corporation…

"At least she wouldn't be in the current situation…" I mumbled.

She probably wouldn't have experienced the same humiliation she did just now.

'You messed with the wrong person.'

Jung Ha-Yan was surprisingly fierce because she knew the difference in power very well. A lot had changed compared to the time she had killed the woman whose name I couldn't even remember anymore. She knew her position within society very well, and she was well aware of other's position in society as well as their powers. She also knew how important some people were to me. For example, she had already categorized Cha Hee-Ra, Kasugano Yuno, Lee Ji-Hye, and Dialugia as people important to me. Strong people, people that would be helpful to Oppa, useful people, and people she shouldn't harm even though she disliked them. I couldn't read Jung Ha-Yan's mind, but after watching her for a long time, it was something I was able to figure out. However, that didn't mean her nature had completely changed. Jung Ha-Yan would still get *very* jealous, and she would sometimes display a cold expression.

In Han Sora's case, she was neither strong nor helpful to me. She wasn't useful, and her place in society was extremely low. This was just my assumption, but I didn't

think Jung Ha-Yan was going to hold back even though she knew better than anyone that there hadn't been any physical contact between us…

'Based on her reaction, I think she forgot… '

It seemed like Jung Ha-Yan had forgotten about everything due to the shock of what she had seen.

'It doesn't matter.'

After recalling Jung Ha-Yan's crying face, I thought about giving her a big reward if she took care of this issue properly.

"I wonder who I should recruit as a rearguard…"

* * *

'My[1] *plan worked out better than I thought… '*

I had planned many things, but the timing of everything was better than I expected. The best part was when Miss Jung Ha-Yan saw us. Actually, the situation would have been better if that stupid alchemist had accepted my offer, but unfortunately, he rejected me. He looked so relaxed that I thought maybe he had something up his sleeve that I wasn't aware of, but…

'He's done for.'

Everything ended perfectly. It was his mistake to think that he was the only one who had a trap card. I was sure that he would try to control the instructors to prevent the rumors from spreading, but I had planned many things, and to make it even more effective, I had to bring Miss Jung Ha-Yan to my side. I was happy when I saw her leave while crying. I was sure the majority of ordinary women would react the same way she did. The sight was obviously shocking to her because she saw the man she loved molesting and sexually assaulting another woman. I was going to visit the Red Mercenary Guild first, but after seeing Miss Jung Ha-Yan's reaction, I thought going to her would be more effective. Since she was in a really confused state right now, it would be best to go find her and tell her the truth. After talking to her for a bit, she would naturally become Lee Ki-Young's enemy.

'It may take some time, but convincing a slow-witted person like her should be easy.'

Bringing her to my side before the Red Mercenary Guild started their investigation was the most important. I was the victim, not Mr Lee Ki-Young's partner in an affair, and it was important to emphasize that.

While I was heading to the place where Jung Ha-Yan had gone, I saw a few people looking at me, and I was happy because they could be witnesses. I continued to hold back my smile, and when I knocked on the door of Jung Ha-Yan's room, there was no answer.

"I-I'm coming in, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. *Heuk*…" I informed her.

"…"

When I opened the door after bursting into tears, I saw Miss Jung Ha-Yan covered in a blanket.

"I-I'm sorry. It was so sudden… I know it's rude of me to do this, but you're the only person I could ask for help. I-I didn't want you to misunderstand…" I started.

"*Hiccup… heuk…"*

"I didn't have any other intention. Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Mr. Lee Ki-Young j-just told me to come to his temporary office… I thought he was going to make a recruitment offer…" I continued.

"*Hiccup…"*

"It's a misunderstanding. It's not what you think," I added.

"A misunderstanding?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"That's right. I wasn't in that situation because I'm in a relationship with Mr. Lee Ki-Young…" I replied.

"…"

"I-It's difficult for me to say this, but… Mr. Lee Ki-Young… *heuk*…" I sniffled.

"…"

“He said he would put in a good word for me at the guild if I listen to him… I-I told him that I didn’t want to, but…” I paused.

“*Hiccup*… Oppa said that?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

Yes…

“Yes and I told him we shouldn’t do this, but… he suddenly—”

“T-T-Touched you?” she asked, finishing my sentence.

“He did…” I answered.

“W-Where did he touch you?” she questioned.

“It’s a bit uncomfortable to say…” I told her.

“I-I’m asking you where he touched you!” she yelled.

I was a bit surprised when she suddenly yelled at me, but I couldn’t help but feel happy. Jung Ha-Yan was more worked up than I thought, and it seemed like she was becoming mentally unstable.

“He touched… my chest…” I started.

“*Heu… heuuuuuuuuung… hiccup… waaaaah…*”

‘It’s over.’

I was sure that stupid alchemist was proving his innocence to the Red Mercenary Guild right now, but once I brought this slow-witted woman over to my side, my plan would basically be considered half-successful.

“What did… *hiccup*… oppa say… when he touched you?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“Is it okay—”

“H-H-Hurry up and tell me!!” she yelled before I could finish.

“He said… I was charming, but of course, I kept telling him no…” I answered.

“Charming?” she repeated.

“Yes. I knew we shouldn’t do it… since he has you, but he said… I was attracting him… *heuk*… *sexually.* He even kissed me forcefully,” I added.

“…”

“He told me not to tell anyone as he lifted my skirt…” I continued.

“D-Down there, too? *Hiccup*…” she asked.

“Yes…” I replied.

“*Heu… heuuuuk… hiccup… waaaaah…”* she cried out.

‘She sure cries a lot.’

I knew that it had been a very shocking situation, but I had never imagined that she would cry like this while covering herself with a blanket. When she cried as if her world was crumbling down, I thought again about how maybe she *did* have a mental issue. The situation earlier had *truly* been mentally shocking for her. I thought about how it would make it easier for her to come over to my side, but it would make things complicated if we went to the point where I had to explain everything.

‘I need to give evidence… tsk. How annoying… ’

“*Heuuuuk…* No… Noooo… *hiccup*,” Jung Ha-Yan blurted.

“I’m sure it’s really shocking for you, Miss Jung Ha-Yan,” I said.

“I-I’m going to kill…”

“You shouldn’t do that. It’s not right…” I commented.

“*Hiccup*… *gaaah… waaah…* I-I-I-I'm going to kill… I’m going to kill!” she screamed.

‘She really is a crazy bitch.’

“Wouldn’t it be better if we go to the Red Mercenary Group and explain the situation first? I-It’ll put you in a difficult situation if you do that… The situation will become

worse, so let's testify… Of course, I'm not saying that what Mr. Lee Ki-Young did was right, but you still shouldn't kill…"

"I-I can kill. U-Useless. This time… right? Just this once. This will really be the last time…" she muttered.

"What?" I asked.

"I-I shouldn't… no! Oppa will get mad. I might get in really big trouble. It'll be serious this time. What if he tells me that I can't approach him again?" she asked.

"What… What did you say… just now?" I asked her.

"But she's nothing. She's not helpful like that redhead and blind woman! Oppa didn't tell me to be careful either! He basically hasn't said anything yet. Wait! This is different! I-I might not get into big trouble this time!" she continued talking to herself.

"Ha-Yan…" I called out cautiously.

"Can I? J-Just this once. Yeah… she doesn't have any potential… Oppa has misunderstood this time. He hasn't even made a recruitment offer yet. Yeah! She's useless!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"Ma'am?" I called out to her once again.

"Okay! I-I-I'll… kill her! No… I told you we shouldn't kill. Oppa will find out if we do," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"Huh?"

Click.

"As long as I don't kill her… *Okay!* As long as I don't kill her! Let's do that!" she exclaimed.

I heard the door being locked.

"*Hehehe*…" Jung Ha-Yan giggled.

I wasn't sure what was going on, but I had no choice but to suddenly start moving. It was then that I saw a small dagger stabbed into my chest.

"*Huh?*"

I could feel warm blood flowing out of me, but I screamed—not because it was painful—but because I was afraid.

"*Aaaaah!*"

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1. Han Sora's POV ☜

CHAPTER 213
AN OMINOUS FEELING (5)

Of course, I[1]was curious about what was going on. I tried to walked back as I held my burning chest, but my body wouldn't move the way I wanted to. It was obvious why.

'Magic? But she didn't cast anything… Is this… possible?'

I learned in class that simple magic could be done without channeling, but I didn't think it was actually possible. It had to be an improved version of a binding spell.

I had many thoughts in my head, but none of them were normal thoughts because I couldn't even understand the current situation.

"*Ah… ah…*"

When I turned my head slowly, I saw the inside of a dark room, and it was a spooky room without a single light. It was difficult to believe that this was the same room I had come into just now so I could talk to her. It was starting to get difficult to breathe, but it wasn't because of the dagger in my chest. Jung Ha-Yan must have filled this room with magic.

"*Ah… aaaccck!*"

I unknowingly kept on screaming. Before my brain could process what was going on, my body was already shaking on its own.

"D-Don't do this! *Aaahhh!*" I screamed.

"…"

"P-Please spare me… spare me. Please spare me. Please spare me," I begged.

"I-I'm not going to kill you. I can't kill you," Jung Ha-Yan stated.

“Don’t come near me! Don’t come close to me!” I yelled.

“I-I-I don’t want to. *Hehehe*,” she giggled.

I finally realized why I was feeling anxious back then. I wasn’t seeing things, and I wasn’t sick either. The fear I felt back then filled me up once again, and it was to the point that I couldn’t even feel the pain in my chest.

I was in an enclosed space, so I couldn’t move, but what bothered me the most was that Jung Ha-Yan was looking at me with her messy hair. She had the same twisted smile as last time, and her eyes looked empty for some reason.

‘What should I do?’

I couldn’t think of anything.

‘What do I do?’

I obviously couldn’t think of anything because one wrong move would get me killed. Actually, dying wasn’t the problem. The only thought that filled my head was how I could escape from this place.

My chin and body started to quiver.

‘He knew… ’

Lee Ki-Young knew that this woman was completely insane.

‘That’s why he told me to wear the cape and go out.’

He knew that this would happen.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan, please don’t do this. I didn’t do anything… wrong. I just…”

“*Eeeek!!*”

“*Aaaahhhhh!*”

When I heard a *fwoosh* sound, I felt something being buried deep into the back of my hand.

“You thief!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

I kept hearing the *fwoosh, fwoosh* sound, and my body was in so much pain it felt like I was on fire. It was so painful that I couldn’t even scream properly. It was frustrating that I couldn’t move my body.

“Stupid! Idiot!” she screamed.

“*Aaaahhh*!”

It was painful. I kept crying due to the fear and pain. I couldn’t figure out what was happening to my body.

“It hurts! It’s so painful! Please save me. Please… please spare me,” I begged again.

When I came back to my senses, I felt like I had lost sight in one of my eyes, and I discovered that I couldn’t move my arms and legs properly.

‘I’m definitely going to die here.’

When I couldn’t scream, no, when my voice wouldn’t even come out, I had no choice but to open my mouth because I had finally realized what I had to do to survive. Actually, I had known about this solution a while ago; I simply missed my chance to speak properly because I was busy screaming.

“It’s… a lie. Nothing… happened…”

“…”

“Nothing happened…” I repeated myself.

“*Uh*…”

“Happened…” I said again.

When my whole body became numb, I managed to say those words while coughing out blood, and then, the room became quiet. For a moment, I thought maybe that demon had left the room, but when I heard her whispering, I had no choice but to acknowledge the fact that I was wrong.

“What… did you say?”

“I… was… lying. Nothing like that happened…” I told her again.

“Lies,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“It’s… true… I made it… all up…” I mumbled.

“What?” she asked.

“It’s… all made up… I’m sorry… please… spare… me,” I requested.

“What? R-Really? *Oh*. It must be true,” she commented.

“Please spare me…” I cried.

“We’re in big trouble. What should I do? What should I do? D-Did anyone see you come here?” she asked.

She sounded a bit flustered. I wasn’t sure if what I said just now helped her calm down a bit, but her voice had become different from a moment ago when she sounded like a madwoman. She was speaking in the same manner as the Miss Jung Ha-Yan I knew.

I was losing consciousness, but I forced myself to stay awake because I knew very well that her question just now was directly connected to my survival.

“Yes… the Red Mercenary Guild members… a few…” I replied.

If no one saw me, then the person named Han Sora would no longer exist because Jung Ha-Yan seemed extremely indifferent when it came to killing people.

‘Shit… ’

Now that I thought about it, there were a few red flags. Chang-Ryeol Oppa’s warning and the majority of my other comrades advised me not to do anything foolish. Even Mr. Lee Ki-Young gave me that advice. Naturally, I remembered how he looked at me like I was pitiful, and tears started to flow out of my other eye when I recalled all this.

“Don’t cry,” Jung Ha-Yan comforted.

“I won’t… tell… anyone. Please spare me,” I pleaded.

“I told you I’m not going to kill you. W-Where’s the potion? This… was your punishment for lying. You can think of it that way. Han Sora! You shouldn’t lie to your instructor!” she shouted.

“Okay…” I mumbled.

“W-Why would you lie like that?” she questioned.

“I’m… sorry,” I apologized.

“But, wh-what should I do? I can’t let Oppa find out…” she stuttered.

“It’s ok… my… eyes keep… clos…”

“N-No! Don’t die!” she panicked.

Her attitude had become so different from earlier that I started to panic. After I felt something warm being poured on my entire body, I lost consciousness. Before the lights could completely go out, I prayed that when I opened my eyes again, I would be in a different room.

* * *

No matter how much I[2] thought about it…

‘She went too far… ’

I knew Jung Ha-Yan was going to do something, but I had never imagined she would take it this far. I guess she had definitely vented all the stress that had been building up inside her recently. If she didn’t visit Sun Hee-Young, then Han Sora could have died, so I guess she really cornered her until she was dying. Obviously, I didn’t blame her for her actions. What she had done wasn't worth complimenting, so I complimented her in a different way. I didn’t focus on the fact that she had messed Han Sora up, but I praised her for punishing a student that was going to do something bad. Basically, Jung Ha-Yan got lucky. The jealousy that had made her run wild helped her catch a criminal.

After Han Sora’s physical wounds were treated with Sun Hee-Young’s help, Jung Ha-

Yan brought her to me while looking like a sinner who had committed high treason, and after explaining the situation to me, she asked me for a reward with a proud look. Her attitude changed so fast that I was a bit surprised.

Anyway, I was a bit busy, but I did enjoy my time with her. During all of this, the demonstration began, and the majority of the trainees unlocked their first jobs. As the person in charge of teaching those with production-type jobs, I gathered all the mages and officially started teaching them about alchemy, and surprisingly, Lee Chang-Ryeol accepted the low salary the guild had offered him.

'It was what he wanted… '

For him, having a place to train was more important than his salary. Despite the fact that his name wasn't deserving of the price, his mentality wasn't poor at all, and I wanted to applaud him for that. All he wanted was a small room he could quietly spend his time in and an epic-ranked weapon he could use.

'He's interesting.'

The conversation regarding Yoo Ah-Young was going well, too. Kim Hyun-Sung couldn't really understand why I wanted to recruit her, but when I desperately insisted on recruiting her, he nodded in agreement. She was still between number two and three, but her legendary-ranked stat had to be real because as time went on, she was getting better and better.

It was around that time when Han Sora woke up and started attending class. The injuries she suffered left an enormous scar on her body. Most of her mana circuits were broken, and according to Sun Hee-Young, they would recover after a year, but her life as a mage was basically over. However, that didn't mean she couldn't return at all, but anyway, her entire body was undeniably ruined. In the end, one of her eyes didn't recover, and her legs were slightly lame. I was sure there were more issues, but Han Sora seemed like she was trying her best not to show it. The interesting part was that she came to listen to the alchemy class I was teaching.

"Thank you… for the opportunity," Han Sora said.

"What?" I asked.

"Thank you… for trying to save me… back then," she replied.

From my point of view, I had done nothing but wave my hand out of annoyance and tell her to wear the cape and leave, but from her point of view, I guess she thought I had given her a chance. The result wasn't that great, but I had never imagined that Han Sora would take it that way, so I just nodded in agreement.

It was surprising how focused she was in my class. I wasn't sure if she was planning on becoming an alchemist, but she didn't seem like she had given up on life. The most interesting part was that the sidekicks who had previously been following her around started bullying her a bit, and even though I hadn't seen it myself, it seemed like she had been immediately labeled as the weakest member in the newly formed party.

'Humans sure are funny… '

If my memory served me right, the girls who had been following her around were the ones who started bullying her first. The only thing I saw was them treating Han Sora like a handicapped person and making fun of her behind her back, but I was sure they were treating her worse than that. However, I didn't pity her. She *did* seem kind of pathetic when she limped around with her bandage-wrapped legs, but she and I were in different positions, so I couldn't really feel her pain.

Anyway, Han Sora was enduring her painful life, and I noticed her trying to avoid Jung Ha-Yan. But whenever they met, her body would start shaking, and she would end up peeing herself.

'Just what in the world did Jung Ha-Yan do to her?'

I was sure that wasn't the only thing that haunted Han Sora. She couldn't participate in the demonstration since she had been absent for a long time, so she obviously wasn't going to receive any kind of offer from the other guilds. Once this training period ended, she wouldn't have any place to go. And that would be the end of her story.

As soon as I started losing interest in her, I focused on finding people for the rearguard. I had previously assumed that Kim Hyun-Sung was going to recruit many talented people he knew in the future, but he didn't seem all that interested in the trainees this year. However, he was *definitely* doubting his memory because he would sometimes visit the training camp and look at the trainees, but I guess he had realized the person he was looking for wasn't here because he started to take his

time when looking at the close-combat trainees while they were training. Basically, the Blue Guild had three more priority negotiation rights, and we weren't using them to their full potential.

As always, I noticed Cha Hee-Ra talking, and even though she didn't ask me right away, we would always end up talking about the same thing no matter what kind of conversation we had.

"Are you sure it's okay to let her stay, darling?"

"Who?" I asked.

"That rude bitch, Han Sora," she answered.

"It's fine," I told her.

"Wow…"

"What?" I asked her.

"I was just thinking that maybe you've become generous. Don't you usually go all out and do whatever it takes to enjoy the suffering of other people?" she asked.

"It depends on the opponent. If I had that thought in the first place, she wouldn't be alive right now. By the way, how much did you pay them?" I asked.

"About a hundred gold per person," she replied.

"That's not much. Or is it a lot from their point of view?" I questioned.

"The plan wasn't going to work out, anyway. What matters is that they came to us first and told us the situation. I don't really think the girls are nice, but they still did something good. I do feel bad for that Han Sora girl, though. She considered them her friends, but they told us her entire plan. It was pretty hilarious," Cha Hee-Ra explained.

"I'm sure those girls thought that working with us was going to be more beneficial than if they worked with her," I commented.

"They even asked if they could get a recruitment offer to our guild as a reward. I was

going to teach them a lesson, but I held back. Anyway…" she paused.

She was finally getting to the point.

"You do plan on using those, am I right, darling? The other guilds can't wait any longer. I'm trying my best to postpone the opening of the transfer market, but the mid-sized clans and the recruiters who attended the demonstration have been asking me to open it up… Why not just recruit anyone?" she asked.

"*Ugh*… Our guild master doesn't really like that idea, and the Blue Guild has been aiming to recruit minor elite players from the start…" I replied.

"*Geez,* you talk about Kim Hyun-Sung every day. Are you sure there's nothing going on between you two?" Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

"I told you there's nothing," I retorted.

"Alright, fine. Anyway, you're going to use them, right? Park Yeon-Joo from the Black Swan Guild has been making a big fuss out of it. She yelled at me, saying that she was part of the alliance, too," she complained.

"I'm indebted to her, anyway, so I can give her a single priority negotiation right, and once we're done recruiting Yoo Ah-Young, I think you can just open it up. *Oh,* noona. I'll just give you the remaining negotiation right, so—"

"Ahn Ki-Mo?" she asked before I could finish.

"*Huh?*"

"That bastard has been telling me nonstop that he wants to transfer to the Blue Guild…" she said.

"You don't want him to, noona?" I asked.

"I don't really care, but… you'll have to pay me since our guild has invested a lot in that bastard," she replied.

"That's fine," I told her.

"He told me about being loyal to me and whatnot. That stupid bastard. He's pretty

cunning, so don't trust him too much, darling. I'm still annoyed about him backstabbing me. When he first joined, he said this guild was going to be his grave and talked all that bullshit about how he was willing to die with his guildmates, but now, he's saying that he wants to join the Blue Guild. I thought he was just a comedian, but *seriously*—you'll never know when he'll backstab you, so be careful," Cha Hee-Ra warned.

"Thanks…" I muttered.

He *did* portray himself that way.

Even though I was enjoying my time with Cha Hee-Ra, I had to get going. When I stood up from my seat, I noticed her looking straight at me.

"Heading to the interview, darling?"

"Yeah, I need to meet with Yoo Ah-Young. I want to recruit her as soon as possible, but she hasn't been accepting the offer," I explained.

"The big ones are usually like that," she commented.

"That's sexual harassment, noona," I warned her.

"I didn't say where, though," she retorted.

When I turned my head, I saw her smiling as if she was teasing me, so I had no choice but to quickly leave the office.

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1. Han Sora's POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 214
GANGWON PROVINCE'S LOVE DOCTOR (1)

Spending time at a place like this would eventually expose you to things you wouldn't want to see. However, that didn't apply to our party as we were receiving special treatment from the Blue Guild. The majority of people were like that, but their actions were more noticeable in a confined place like this. Aside from the trainees from the attack group, the others all had the same starting line, so they learned and trained together. I was sure they had different goals, but they all knew that powerful people would receive special treatment. As such, when the training camp's end was getting closer and closer, the majority of the trainees started to change out of desperation and apprehension.

I wasn't sure if this is a proper comparison, but if I had to give an example, I would say they were like examinees. The fields may be different, but they didn't seem out of place. As the exam day got closer, the trainees became more and more anxious.

'I'm sure I'll at least get accepted into a mid-sized guild. With my skills, I'll probably get an offer from one of the main guilds in Lindel.'

They initially thought they didn't have to work to eke out a living, but when the reality became clearer to them, the thought was erased from their minds. They realized that they had nowhere to go.

The attack team and those that showed promise were envied by many since they had received an offer from guilds after passing the entrance test. This caused the remaining trainees to become anxious. They tried their best to make themselves more appealing, but since they weren't talented, they couldn't show much as time was limited.

At this point, it had become obvious who was talented and who was talentless. Both sides were taking the same class, but the level of achievement between those with talent and those without was noticeably different.

'I think they can join a mid-sized guild.'

Or…

‘I’m jealous. I heard they’re joining the Red Mercenary Guild.’

And…

‘I guess it’s not bad since their alchemy grades are good.’

Also…

‘You’re still thinking about the offer from the Blue Guild? You received an offer from the Red Mercenary Guild, too?’

Some were going to become successful, while others had nowhere to go. The problem was that these trainees were using the same classroom, cafeteria, and dorms. An invisible rank was starting to form, and the maids and servants similar to those who had been with Han Sora started to appear everywhere. They were trying their best to survive in a society that had nothing for them.

Even though it was only for a moment, the nominated trainees had probably gotten a taste of the high-class life. A life where everyone respected and treated them well. Of course, they were still cautious of their actions. Although there were people who seemed to be saying, 'don't approach me’ like Lee Chang-Ryeol, the majority of them had slowly accepted the sense of superiority that the maids and servants were giving them.

‘It’s all about the connection.’

It wasn’t that bad because they would meet all sorts of people once they joined the society, and a connection with a promising player was a good thing. The problem was with the people who had hit rock bottom. Treating them indifferently was considered being nice, as there had always been people who took solace in knowing that others were suffering more than them. Those people hadn’t received any nominations, and they weren’t talented, either. However, they would bully those at the bottom to console themselves every day that—at the very least—they were better than them.

I wasn’t in the training camp every day, so I didn’t witness every instance of bullying, but I was certain that Han Sora and a few others were being bullied. The others probably had it better than Han Sora, who had fallen from grace and was now being

ridiculed at every turn. This outcome didn't come as a surprise as she had been a rookie whom everyone had high expectations for, but now, she had become a cripple who couldn't even use her mana properly.

'There's someone opposite of her.'

If Han Sora fell to the bottom, then Yoo Ah-Young was the opposite because she started from the bottom and climbed to the top. Of course, she hadn't really put in a lot of effort because she was the type of person who grew quickly without even trying.

When I first entered the classroom, I complimented her potential, which made others dislike her, but once her true value was revealed, those who disliked her pledged their loyalty toward her as if they were willing to die for her. She had a close-combat job, and when her evaluation and grades reached the top from the bottom, the unofficial rumor about her receiving an offer from the Blue Guild turned official. It felt like a plague had spread because the talentless trainees gathered around her, basically turning her into the Pied Piper.

Seeing Yoo Ah-Young talking to Park Deok-Gu in front of me made me think that the world was definitely unfair.

"*Ahem*… So, about the Blue Guild. I guess… you can say that we have good support… or something like that. A long time ago, I honestly had nothing, but everything changed once I joined the Blue Guild. So… if it's something we can provide, we can give it all to you," Park Deok-Gu told her.

"*Oh*… okay…" Yoo Ah-Young mumbled.

"If you want to change your life, join the Blue Guild! I guarantee it! I'm sure you heard it already. Even though it hasn't been officially announced yet, our guild master bro and hyung-nim were selected for the Eight Seats, and our noonim is so good at magic that your mouth will drop when you see her magic go *pew pew! Boom!*" he continued.

"I see…"

"The kid named Ye-Ri is so fast that once she starts moving, your eyes won't be able to catch up to her and the spear-wielding noonim Jo Hye-Jin is really talented with the spear and… And! Miss Jung-Yeon, the Magic Scholar, is really smart. She's

probably just as smart as our hyung-nim. Not only does she have a really good memory, but she's good at doing administrative work as well! Sun Hee-Young noonim is kind of scary, but her holy magic is incredible. Of course, that's if we enter a dungeon together," he added.

"*Ah*," she said.

"When we rush into a dungeon, the monsters will move here and there when the guild master bro starts attacking! They'll be here! And then over there! They'll start falling like leaves, and noomnim, hyung-nim, and Miss Jung-Yeon will use their magic! Some of the monsters will start exploding, and the others will go *boom* once they're gathered in one place! That kid Ye-Ri is also good at shooting arrows, so they'll start flying like *swoosh, whoosh*! And if there's a monster that jumps at us, Jo Hye-Jin noonim will use her spear and move like this! And then like this! Almost like a snake!" he exclaimed.

"*Pffft*."

"Everything happens so fast that I don't even need to do anything! It's really fast and safe. Last time…" Park Deok-Gu paused.

"Yes?" she asked.

"Here, have a drink and eat some of the meat! I'm sure they don't serve good food at the camp," he told her.

"No, it's actually not as bad as you think. The dorm is nice too," she replied.

'Deok-Gu! You're doing great!'

When I saw Yoo Ah-Young smiling lightly, I realized that my assumption was right.

'Nice.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had already interviewed her several times, and I had even interviewed her once. We had already handed over a guild catalog to her, so I thought maybe she was dissatisfied with the salary, so we kept increasing it as we talked to her. Kim Hyun-Sung approached her first, so he could get close to her. Unfortunately, his social skills weren't that great, so it was impossible for him to convince her. I also tried my best to curry favor with Yoo Ah-Young, but she seemed wary of me for some

reason. As such, I decided not to approach her anymore. I thought getting Park Deok-Gu involved might yield some results, and my assumption quickly became true when he started talking to her.

'I really have no idea what she's thinking.'

I was certain that Park Deok-Gu's social appeal was better than mine, and even though it all depended on one's taste, he didn't seem like he had a facade. I couldn't help but nod once again when I recalled how he got close to her instantly during our first meal.

"You two seem really close," Yoo Ah-Young commented.

"Of course we are! Didn't I tell you last time? Obviously, I'm close to the other members as well, but hyung-nim, Mr. Hyun-Sung, and I are… How do I describe it… We have a close bond that started since the tutorial dungeon. We have a passionate friendship that only men can understand! I can finally understand what hyung-nim and the bro are thinking even with my eyes closed!" he boasted.

He had to be misunderstanding that part…

"Speaking of the tutorial dungeon, I remembered something. After hyung-nim beat the monster's head with a rock like *boom!* he said this, 'Deok-Gu, if I can do it… you can do it even better.' Yeah! I was trembling in fear, but after hearing that, I became courageous!" Park Deok-Gu continued.

'How many times has he told that story?'

The only downside was that I was getting embarrassed, but it was bearable.

"You told me that story last week, Deok-Gu Oppa." Yoo Ah-Young pointed out.

"Did I?" he asked.

"Yes, but it puts me in a good mood every time I hear it. It just feels like you two are close," she commented.

"*Hahaha*. That's how we are. Of course I cherish my relationship with Deok-Gu, Ha-Yan, and Mr. Hyun-Sung since we met in the tutorial dungeon, but what the Blue Guild considers important is having a family-like atmosphere. We also have a good

relationship with other guilds," I chimed in.

"*Oh!* I see…"

"We're really like a family," I added.

"Of course we are! However, Hyung-nim and noonim might actually become a *real* family!" he shouted.

"*Ah*… so you two are in a relationship. I heard rumors about it, but it wasn't confirmed so I didn't think much of it…" she mentioned.

"We're… dating for now…" I commented.

"And it was Park Deok-Gu, Gangwon Province's Love Doctor, who made them into a couple!" he announced.

"What?" she asked, astonished.

"I connected those two together and played an important role. Noonim is a bit timid, so I helped her. *Ahem*…" he answered.

"Gangwon Province's Love Doctor? So you two met in the tutorial dungeon and started dating?" Yoo Ah-Young questioned.

"Yes, that's what happened," I replied.

She seemed really interested.

'Is she interested in stuff like this?'

I thought it was possible because despite how fast the time passed, she was still in her early 20s, so it was natural for her to be interested in love stories like this.

I was about to talk, but Park Deok-Gu beat me to it.

"You see… noonim was originally a genius, but! *Ahem!* She went through some stuff while we were in the tutorial dungeon. I don't know the details, but I think there were people who didn't like her…" he started.

“I see…” Yoo Ah-Young nodded.

“There were bad people who bullied and made her feel isolated. During that time, our bro gathered the survivors in one place in the tutorial dungeon and was protecting them… Anyway, they even gave noonim less food on purpose! Those mean bastards!” he cursed.

“*Ah*…”

“I didn’t want to say this, but there was this bastard! He tried to make a move on noonim! Wait, maybe this isn’t appropriate to say. Moving on, even though noonim didn’t say anything, she was suffering a lot back then,” Park Deok-Gu continued.

“I see…”

“And then, our Ki-Young hyung-nim came to the rescue,” he added.

My face turned red.

‘How embarrassing.’

However, it wasn’t so bad because Yoo Ah-Young glanced at me, nodding.

“That’s when Ki-Young hyung-nim started taking care of noonim. Naturally, he only took care of her because she reminded him of his little sister, but… the heart doesn’t work like that. Since noonim liked hyung-nim so much, I gave her advice here and there…” he explained.

“*Oh*…” she muttered.

“Everyone in Gangwon Province knows Park Deok-Gu, the Love Doctor. *Ahem*. It wasn’t that big of a deal. It’ll be a long story if I go into details, but I gave noonim tips and tricks discreetly and before I knew it, the two became close. Once Gangwon Province’s Love Doctor gets involved, there’s no stopping it!” he exclaimed.

“*Oh*, right…”

“But in the end, their love only blossomed because of themselves. Noonim took courage, and eventually, hyung-nim started liking her, too. Actually, they were the ones who took a big part in starting their beautiful relationship, not me. The only

thing the Love Doctor did was give them a little push," Park Deok-Gu added.

'This pig… '

Seeing him glance over and giving me a thumbs up did make me feel a bit upset, but Yoo Ah-Young's reaction wasn't so bad. Not only did she nod, but it seemed like she was quite impressed by Park Deok-Gu's last statement.

That was when she started talking.

"I…"

"Yes?"

"If you don't mind, can I get some advice? It's related to joining the guild as well…" she requested.

I hadn't expected this.

CHAPTER 215
GANGWON PROVINCE'S LOVE DOCTOR (2)

"Of course! I'm Gangwon Province's Love Doctor Park Deok-Gu, after all!" Park Deok-Gu exclaimed.

I wasn't sure if he *really* was a well-known love doctor, but in contrast to me, who was flustered because of his sudden outburst, Park Deok-Gu seemed excited because it had been a while since he received a consultation request.

'I wonder who it is.'

I was feeling out of it due to his outbursts, but I was curious as well.

'Is it Kim Hyun-Sung?'

It was likely because unlike Park Deok-Gu and me, our lovely regressor wasn't only handsome, but he also had a unique demeanor. If I were a woman, I would have chased after him, and since I was talented, I would have put up a wall so that other women wouldn't be able to get close to him.

'Or is it one of the trainees?'

If Yoo Ah-Young liked one of the trainees, there wouldn't be a reason for her not to accept our guild's offer, and even though I was curious about many things, I decided to wait since she was going to answer anyway.

"Well…" Yoo Ah-Young started.

"Out with it." Park Deok-Gu encouraged her.

"I…"

"It's fine; just say it," he said.

After taking a deep breath, she started talking, but what she said was kind of

surprising.

“To be honest… I’m dating someone right now,” she informed us.

‘What?’

“*Huh?*”

“Like Mr. Lee Ki-Young and Miss Jung Ha-Yan, I met him at the tutorial dungeon…” she continued.

“*Aahhh*…” he commented.

Unlike my assumption that she had a crush on someone, it was kind of surprising that she was already dating someone, but it didn’t feel strange.

‘That’s because… ’

Men would naturally be favorable to women like her because even though she was timid, she was beautiful. I was sure she was still experiencing it now, but I was certain there were people who tried to make a move on her, even in the tutorial dungeon.

“You two are already dating, so I don’t think you need my help…” Park Deok-Gu pointed out.

I hadn’t imagined that Yoo Ah-Young would have a boyfriend within the training camp, as I could definitely remember her being all alone. I wasn’t really interested in the other trainees, but I was particularly interested in her. This might make me seem like a stalker, but I had done all those to understand her as a person and to know her situation.

‘I haven’t seen her recently, though… ’

I was certain I didn’t see anyone who could be considered her boyfriend. She didn’t really have any friends, and she had always been by herself in the corner. Until she displayed her potential, the only people who talked to her were a group of bastards who looked like bullies, but for some reason, I had an inkling of her situation.

“No, it’s kind of complicated,” she replied.

"*Ahem*. It's unfortunate that I can't give you advice as a love doctor, but I can still give you advice. Are you worried about your love life? Then leave it to Park Deok-Gu!" he exclaimed.

"As I mentioned earlier, I met my oppa in the tutorial dungeon. He saved me when I was about to get attacked by a monster. Neither of us really confessed first, and because of the situation, we didn't really have time to do the things couples usually do…" Yoo Ah-Young explained.

"*Hmm*… I see. It's the same for hyung-nim and noonim," Park Deok-Gu commented.

"You said… Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung, the Guild Master of the Blue Guild, saved survivors, right?" she asked.

"Yeah, he was pretty amazing," he complimented.

"Oppa didn't do the same thing, but what he did was similar to the Guild Master. He saved as many people as he could, and he didn't hesitate to go to dangerous places with other people to get food… It's probably because of us that he didn't participate in the dungeon capture. He wasn't part of the attack team, but he unlocked his job in the tutorial dungeon," she said.

"*Oh!*"

"Anyway, the important thing is that we like each other," she added.

"It's pretty dramatic," Park Deok-Gu remarked.

"It's hard to explain everything that happened in the dungeon, but… *Oh!* So another thing that happened was…" Yoo Ah-Young started.

I wanted to listen more, but I couldn't wait any longer because I had a feeling we would have to stay up all night for these two talkative people to finish their stories. When I spoke to interrupt their useless stories, I immediately heard an answer which successfully changed the topic.

"Miss Yoo Ah-Young, would it be okay if I asked you something?"

"Of course!" she answered.

“My question may sound rude, but I’ve never seen you with your boyfriend. Of course, I understand that it’s hard since you’re a trainee, but you’re usually by yourself…” I pointed out.

“*Aahhh*… When we exited the tutorial dungeon and started training, Oppa suggested that we keep our distance because we have to focus on our training a bit more. I understood his intention, but I did feel kind of sad…” she confessed.

‘I knew it.’

[Checking Player Yoo Ah-Young’s Unique Habit.]

[Rich Heart]

‘She’s a pushover… ’

I felt like the puzzle pieces were falling into place. Her boyfriend wasn’t part of the attack group, but he had unlocked his first job in the tutorial dungeon, while his girlfriend had nothing. If I were to give an example without elaborating it, it was like the boyfriend was ready to live out his life after getting a government job or after getting accepted into a medical school, so he just dumped his girlfriend.

‘He's a clever bastard like me… ’

I was sure there was a reason why he kept Yoo Ah-Young around him in the tutorial dungeon. He could have used her to fulfill his sexual desires, or he could have kept her as someone who could die in his place or someone who could sacrifice for him.

“I don’t think he’s bored of the relationship because Oppa is normally kind of cold-hearted, but he’s warm inside,” she described.

Basically, she was going to get abandoned, and the only reason she survived the tutorial dungeon was because of her luck. If there had been a situation where he had to abandon her, he would have done it in a heartbeat.

The next part of her story was pretty obvious. When he left the tutorial dungeon

after unlocking his first job, he realized that he had talent, and he was annoyed about having a woman who would just hold him back. Since her boyfriend couldn't see other people's talents, he probably thought this woman didn't have any strengths, but I was sure it wouldn't have taken him long to realize that the insurance he had been carrying around was a gem. This was the best time to turn the table.

"The training is almost over, so my Oppa has been approaching me like before. He hasn't received any guild offers, but I'm sure other clans and guilds will want to recruit him. What I'm worried about is—" Yoo Ah-Young paused.

"I'm guessing your boyfriend wants to join the same guild. He probably told you to ask if he can join the Blue Guild with you," I finished her sentence.

"How did you know?" she asked.

It was pretty obvious.

"I just had a feeling," I replied.

"You're right, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. It may sound trivial, but it's important to me… This was the first time someone had expectations for me, and the reason why I was able to train hard was all because of what he told me… I want to accept your offer, but I keep getting worried about Oppa," she explained.

"So you're asking if we can accept him too, right?" I asked.

"I understand that it's an inconvenience," she replied, nodding.

'She's nice.'

If Yoo Ah-Young had asked me to fulfill her request just this once, I might have actually made room for him because she was worthy of that kind of treatment. However, it turned out that she didn't bring it up before because she knew it would be an inconvenience—it was all because of her timid personality.

'He's using her… Should I make room for him?'

Her boyfriend seemed like a piece of trash, but I could use him if it meant she was going to join the guild. Even if he turned out to be unqualified to join a party, he might still be useful elsewhere. As long as he didn't create a commotion about having

his salary raised, it wasn't a bad idea to recruit a talented player through him. The fact that he was able to control Yoo Ah-Young was kind of annoying, but with my current position and power, I could control trash like him like it was nothing. Moreover, I could just get rid of him if he made a mistake.

'I can just give him some gold.'

She looked like a pushover, and because she seemed like she would be willing to give everything she had to someone else, I thought it was about time for me to start working.

While I was tapping the table as I organized my thoughts, Park Deok-Gu spoke seriously.

"Hyung-nim, there's something I want to say."

"Okay…"

"I'm sorry to say this to Miss Ah-Young, but…" he paused.

"Yes?" Yoo Ah-Young asked.

"I think it's best if you break up with him," he finished.

Yoo Ah-Young was a bit flustered, and Park Deok-Gu with a serious expression seemed like a different person. Naturally, I looked at Yoo Ah-Young because I was worried that she was going to yell at Park Deok-Gu for telling her what to do about her relationship with her Oppa.

"I haven't seen him yet, but I honestly don't think he's a great person," he added.

'He's too straightforward… '

I thought he could have been more cautious about it, but he said it so seriously.

'Gangwon Province's Love Doctor, Park Deok-Gu… '

"*Oh*…"

"As the messenger of love, it's heartbreaking that I'm not able to bless your

relationship with him, but he's not worth it at all. I'm not saying this because I'm part of the Blue Guild. Honestly, hyung-nim is able to bring Miss Ah-Young and her boyfriend to the guild without any issues, isn't that right, hyung-nim?" he asked.

"Well, yeah," I replied.

"Our guild has open spots! But in addition to being a problematic person who's just holding you back, he's also not being supportive of the person he loves. He even suggested that you guys should spend some time apart as soon as you guys left the tutorial dungeon. He's obviously a disgraceful and worthless person. There's also a chance that he only approached you because things worked out for you," Park Deok-Gu explained.

"*Ah…*"

This pig was suddenly insightful.

"I know this is random, but let me tell you a story. There was a lady named Oh Young-Hee in my neighborhood, and her husband fell in love with another woman, so he eloped with her to Seoul. He even abandoned his newborn baby. When I was in high school, Miss Young-Hee's restaurant became successful with multiple branches, and it was then that her cheating husband returned, asking her to take him back," he told her.

"*Ah…*"

"In the end, the lady took him back because of the baby, but when she died due to a disease, he went back to the woman he had eloped with and spent all of Miss Young-Hee's money. I'm only telling you this because you seem like a nice person," Park Deok-Gu added.

"I see…"

"Of course, I haven't lived long enough to give you this kind of warning, and I'm not a close-minded person who'll force you to listen to my advice… I'm also not telling you this because I'm older than you… *Oh!* Since we started drinking together, we're basically friends now, so I'm telling you this as your friend. In the end, the decision is up to you, so think carefully about this. Think about whether that man is actually the kind of person you think he is," he suggested.

'What's going on with him?'

"If you don't think he's a bad person, then Love Doctor Park Deok-Gu will support your love until the end," he added.

It was short, but it wasn't bad. The way he said it so seriously made me focus on him, and since the advice was for Yoo Ah-Young, I could deduce her reaction. She knew better than anyone that Park Deok-Gu didn't just say all this so that she could join the guild with her boyfriend. Since she knew that Park Deok-Gu had no ulterior motive, she took his advice seriously. Right now, she was probably thinking if he was *really* the kind of person she thought he was. I wasn't sure what kind of decision she had made internally, as all I could see was her expression becoming worse. Once she was no longer blinded by love, she would start to feel things she hadn't felt before. If this boyfriend of hers had really approached her without any bad intentions, then it probably wouldn't matter, but I guarantee that he was a piece of shit.

"I-I'm not sure…" Yoo Ah-Young stuttered.

She said she wasn't sure, but her sad face showed that a few situations had come to her mind.

"I-If what you're saying is… true… wh-what should I do?" she stuttered.

Park Deok-Gu glanced at me and spoke.

"Our hyung-nim will get revenge for you!"

Now, the situation had become bothersome.

CHAPTER 216
A CUTE REVENGE (1)

People valued different things, but survival was *really* valuable to me. Being carried by Kim Hyun-Sung was *very* important, but I also did my best to survive. I had put my life on the line several times, and I even threw the dice when I visited Cha Hee-Ra. Moreover, there had also been a lot of planning involved just to get rid of the crazy gramps I couldn't get along with. Every day, I thought about how I could climb to a higher position. I knew I should belittle others or mock the worth every person had, but I just couldn't relate to Yoo Ah-Young's issue.

'I understand it, but… '

She was in her early 20s, and I could understand that she needed someone she could rely on when living in a place where monsters existed. A relationship could really help the mentality of both sides, and even though I had no idea what she was thinking, I was sure she survived only because she had someone she had relied on mentally.

'My mental stability lies with Kim Hyun-Sung.'

I could remember feeling a great sense of relief when I was with our warm-hearted regressor, and it may be a bit different from Yoo Ah-Young, but I had always been trying my best to stay close to Kim Hyun-Sung.

'I understand now… '

The hidden camera prank that she and I were going to try out was really amusing. After all, I would *definitely* get angry if someone else tried to take Kim Hyun-Sung away from me after discovering that he was a regressor.

When I glanced to the side, I noticed Yoo Ah-Young looking nervous.

"Are you really okay?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm fine. I do feel bad for my oppa, though… After hearing what Deok-Gu oppa

said, there are a few things bothering me, so I want to confirm it with my own eyes," she replied.

"It could be a bit shocking for you, though…" I warned her.

"I can take it. By the way, are you sure no one can see or hear us?" she asked.

"Yes, I'm sure. Of course, it may not work for people who are sensitive to magic or have keen senses, but this is the training camp. The only people who can see or hear us are the instructors. Not even the attack team can see us," I answered.

"Magic is pretty amazing. You can even make your body invisible. Or should I say that Miss Ha-Yan is incredible?" she asked.

"I don't think there's anyone else who can cast spells as perfectly as her," I told her.

If I had to pick a type of magic that Jung Ha-Yan was skilled at other than attack spells, it was this kind of stalking-type spell. Jung Ha-Yan was an unrivaled specialist when it came to location tracking, camouflage, and sleeping magic. She was so skilled that even the Devil's Guild said that a Jung Ha-Yan school had to be created.

'I'm sure she developed spells I'm not even aware of.'

It was just my assumption, but it was possible because she could even check my heart rate.

"Anyway, let's wait. We can talk while waiting," I suggested.

"D-Do you think he'll come?" she asked.

"You should be hoping that he doesn't come," I pointed out.

Going into an empty classroom after class was a red flag.

"I see…" Yoo Ah-Young mumbled.

After she nodded and went to the corner of the room, the classroom door opened. I assumed the test subjects had arrived, but what we saw were four girls. The three of them looked familiar, but when I saw the fourth girl who had been captured by the other three, I instantly deduced who they were.

'Han Sora's maids.'

However, they had switched to bullying Han Sora instead of being her maids, and it was obvious who they captured. It was none other than Han Sora, who was still limping and wrapped in bandages.

'Oh my… '

I didn't request to use camouflage magic to see this, but I couldn't help but be worried about this sudden event.

'I can't let Yoo Ah-Young know… '

It was publicly announced that Han Sora had gotten into an accident after carelessly entering Jung Ha-Yan's magic lab. We could have announced that she had received punishment because of her ill-will against me, but we couldn't have done that when we saw her condition.

'She was blabbering on about sexual harassment, so we crippled her!'

The former obviously sounded a lot better, but Jung Ha-Yan had become disqualified from teaching due to the careless management of her magic lab. Han Sora, who tried to steal Jung Ha-Yan's magic, received a small compensation, and she wasn't charged for breaking into Jung Ha-Yan's lab. It had been an opportunity to show the Blue Guild's generosity to the trainees.

There was still a bit of time left, so their arrival didn't really matter, but if Yoo Ah-Young heard the maids chattering about the sexual harassment case, this could turn into a *very* awkward situation.

'I'm sure they'll keep quiet since they got a hundred gold for it.'

The girls would probably keep their mouths shut after seeing Han Sora, but I didn't know what was going to happen, so I wasn't exactly happy about them being here. Before I could organize my thoughts, the girls pushed Han Sora and she staggered to a corner of the classroom, and naturally, I could hear the girls talking.

"Look at you. You once acted like the queen, but you're now a cripple, Miss Han Sora. *Pffft*."

“I knew this was going to happen the moment you acted all high and mighty. Mr. Lee Ki-Young was right. The ones who run wild are the first ones to go.”

“…”

“Look at her expression.”

“Relax, bitch.”

“What’s wrong? You don’t like us anymore? Of course, you don’t since the maids that had been buttering up to you are now looking down on you. I’m sure it’s pretty frustrating. I’m sure you are cursing us a lot, but Miss Sora, it’s about time you learn your place!”

“…”

I was a bit shocked to see Han Sora getting beaten up. I knew she was getting bullied, but this was too much.

“Hey, don’t beat her up too badly.”

“It’s okay. It won’t be noticeable. We can just focus on the bandaged areas.”

“No, she might die if we keep going. Her body is already in a bad condition. She can’t even walk properly…”

“Don’t worry. Bitches like her have the energy to take a beating.”

That sounded like a wise proverb.

“She’s not screaming. I told you she’s pretty spiteful. Sora unnie, say something. You acting like this is making us even angrier.”

“…”

“Hey, bring that.”

“O-Okay.”

After thinking about it for a moment, I understood why they were treating Han Sora

that way.

'Inferiority.'

It just so happened that all four of them took alchemy class. Han Sora's mana circuits had been destroyed, so she had no choice but to pick alchemy. However, the remaining three had no choice but to complete the course. The funny part was that Han Sora's grades were the best out of all of them. However, this was only natural since she was smart, astute, and focused on class.

'She's pretty determined.'

I couldn't say she was talented, but she was *definitely* desperate, and I was sure that her behavior had disgusted the maids because they didn't want the queen to stage a comeback.

Yoo Ah-Young wanted to stop them because she started talking, but I shook my head.

"S-Shouldn't we stop them? Mr. Lee Ki-Young?"

"No, let's watch for now. The three trainees will be punished, and I'll take care of Miss Han Sora later. Nothing good will come out of it if we reveal that we have been using camouflage magic," I replied.

"*Ah!*"

"There's also something I personally want to check…" I added.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"It's nothing," I answered.

I didn't understand why we were whispering when Han Sora and the girls couldn't hear us anyway, but I couldn't take my eyes off of the situation. I saw one of the maids holding a bag provokingly.

"Do you know what this is?"

"…"

“Haven’t you seen this before, Sora unnie?”

“G-Give it back,” Han Sora demanded.

“Sora unnie finally opened her mouth. *Pffft*. You didn’t care for it before. Has it become valuable to you now?” one of the girls asked.

‘Wow… they really are the devil… ’

The maid was holding up a cheap, personal alchemist kit that had been handed out for training.

“Give it back!” Han Sora yelled.

Han Sora got up and ran toward the girl while limping, but she wasn’t able to catch up, so she couldn’t take her alchemist kit back. I felt somewhat heartbroken seeing her being bullied like this.

“Give it… back!” a girl imitated her.

“Your imitation of her is hilarious! *Hahaha!*”

“I told you to give it back!” Han Sora yelled once again.

“I told you to give it *baaaaack~!* I don’t want to. Hey, catch!” a girl mocked.

“Okay!”

The maids were throwing around the alchemist kit like kids, and when one of them dropped it, Han Sora grabbed the kit and held on to it tightly. The maids then tried to take the kit away from her, but the way Han Sora held on to the kit made her look resolute.

“Our Sora unnie pretty is determined. Hey, let’s break it,” one of them suggested.

“*Huh?* Really? But they gave it to us, so we could practice with them,” another pointed out.

“So? That’s not our problem. Whether she gets another one or not is none of our business because she’s technically the one who broke it.”

“Don’t…” Han Sora muttered.

“Don’t what? You don’t want us to break this? But I want to. You used to look down on people with production-type jobs, but now, you’re holding an alchemist kit like it’s some kind of treasure. Hey, grab her!”

“I told you to stop. I’m sorry. I’m sorry for what I did,” Han Sora apologized.

“It’s too late to apologize, Sora unnie. *Pffft*.”

I guarantee that those three had the potential to become great villains in the future. I knew I had done some pretty shitty things, but seeing their actions made me think that I should probably learn from them. The scene had progressed to the point that it became ridiculous. The three scummy sisters were trying to step on the kit, but Han Sora was desperately protecting the items inside and she reminded me of Park Deok-Gu when he tried to protect me. However…

‘There’s no way she can stop them.’

In the end, two girls grabbed Han Sora and the other started stomping on the alchemist kit and since it was a cheaply-made kit, I could hear the items breaking even though they were inside the bag.

“Stop! I said stop!” Han Sora screamed.

“I don’t want to. I’m going to keep doing it. *Pffft*…”

“It’s my fault, so please stop!” Han Sora begged.

“Nope. Hey, Sora unnie is crying.”

“*Heuk…* stop…” Han Sora cried.

I couldn’t help but click my tongue when I saw how scummy the three sisters were and it had been a while since I thought of another person as trash.

I guess the girls lost interest when Han Sora grabbed the kit while crying because they started to leave.

“You should’ve acted that way in the first place, Sora. Do you know your place now?

Don’t step out of line, got it? It’s really disgusting trying to get other people to pity you by doing your best. Let’s go girls.”

“Look at the time. We’ll be leaving now, Sora unnie.”

“*Ptui!* Go back to Asgard! You one-eyed Odin!”

“*Hahahaha*, that’s hilarious. Odin!”

Obviously, Han Sora didn’t follow them. I felt uncomfortable when I saw how she cried after checking the items in the bag.

“*Waaaaaaaah*…”

That was when the classroom door opened once again.

‘Is it time for the next bully?’

Yoo Ah-Young had been watching Han Sora with eyes full of pity, but her eyes widened when the classroom door opened. After the three sisters’ departure, another piece of trash arrived.

CHAPTER 217
A CUTE REVENGE (2)

'Tsk.'

Another piece of trash had entered the classroom, and it was a slightly tall, handsome male. Obviously, he wasn't alone, and the girl next to him was quite beautiful.

[Checking Player Kim Ki-Chul's Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Kim Ki-Chul]

[Title - None. Please work harder.]

[Age - 25]

[Nature - Selfish Optimist]

[Job - Warrior]

[Stats]

[Strength - 18/Above rare growth limit]

[Agility - 18/Above rare growth limit]

[Stamina - 18/Below rare growth limit]

[Intelligence - 18/Below rare growth limit]

[Endurance - 18/Above rare growth limit]

[Luck - 18/Above rare growth limit]

[Magic - 08/Above rare growth limit]

[Overall Review - His stats and abilities are mediocre. He's just a piece of trash.]

Even after using Mind's Eye, I couldn't find anything special about him, but one thing I noticed was that he was an optimist like Yoo Ah-Young. Yoo Ah-Young had the word, timid, in the front while this bastard had selfish, but considering the fact that they seemed pretty compatible, it made the situation more interesting.

Anyway, Han Sora was surprised because two people suddenly entered the classroom, and of course, the couple felt awkward since they didn't expect that someone else was in the classroom. After seeing Han Sora, I heard the couple talking.

"*Huh?*"

"What should we do, Oppa? Should we come back next time?" the girl asked.

"We don't know when we might get the chance again. We won't have time anymore, and this is the only classroom that the instructors don't use," Kim Ki-Chul replied.

"We can do it as much as we want later." The girl pointed out.

"I don't want to. I want to be with you now. Excuse me," he said.

"…"

"I'm sorry; I know you're using this room, but mind if we use it?" he asked Han Sora.

"…"

Han Sora didn't have a reason to decline, and even though she didn't answer, she was already getting ready to leave. After looking at the couple, Han Sora wiped her tears, and the way she limped her way out of the room resembled a dog that had gotten wet in the rain.

'I feel really bad for her.'

Lindel was filled with people in situations worse than hers, but after witnessing the situation just now, I couldn't help but pity her despite the fact that she was the one who started it all.

"What's wrong with her? She didn't even answer you, and why does she look like that? Do you know her, Oppa?" the girl asked.

"That was Han Sora," he answered.

"Han Sora?"

"Yeah, the girl that was part of the attack group," he replied.

"Really? The same Han Sora who's a mage? Ki-Chul oppa?" the girl questioned.

"Why are you so dull about the things happening here?" he asked her.

"Is it really something you need to scold me about? It's because I have no interest. My interest…" the girl answered.

"She got caught after trying to steal from Miss Jung Ha-Yan's lab. I heard she's pretty greedy, but… she was just unlucky. When Miss Jung Ha-Yan left the lab, she messed with one of her experiments, and it exploded," he explained.

"*Aahhh*…"

"I understand that she's curious about the research the genius mage was doing, but she's pretty crazy for doing that. Thanks to that, a lot of mages resent her. Miss Jung Ha-Yan's lectures may have been all over the place, and it was sometimes difficult to understand her, but many people said she was helpful, and it was because of her that I learned how to control my mana… Even the warriors thought she was helpful," he added.

"*Ohh*… I see," the girl commented.

"Han Sora was at fault, but I was sad that Miss Jung Ha-Yan got disqualified from teaching. I should have gotten closer to her…" Kim Ki-Chul muttered.

"Why? So you can join the Blue Guild?" the girl asked.

“It hasn’t been confirmed yet. I have a good chance at joining the other guilds too, but it’ll be helpful to have connections with someone like her. We’re already in society. Rather than wasting time, it’s best to get close to the instructors,” he said.

“Is that the reason why you're nice to me?” the girl questioned.

“Well… do you want to know?” he asked.

“No thanks. I’ll just sit back and enjoy the ride,” she replied.

“This is why I like you,” he told her.

When I looked to the side, I saw Yoo Ah-Young shaking and I flinched when I saw that. However, Yoo Ah-Young wasn’t Jung Ha-Yan, so she neither took her daggers out nor chanted her spell. I wasn’t sure if she was bothered by the girl or by something else, but the experimental couple was in a pretty steamy situation. I wasn’t sure of the details, but this was obviously not the couple’s first time because they looked really intimate.

‘Tsk, tsk.’

[Checking Player Kim Ki-Chul’s Unique Habit.]

[A Lustful Fox]

A really obvious unique habit popped up when I checked.

‘I guess he likes women.’

As expected, I didn’t really like him. When I saw how he was already thinking about his connections with the instructors showed that he knew the position he was in, but it seemed that his morals were lacking. I couldn’t recall any good guys acting like him.

“By the way, don’t you have a girlfriend? Is it okay to do this?” the girl asked.

“You ask me that every day.” Kim Ki-Chul pointed out.

“Because that’s what gets me excited. Don’t you feel the same, oppa?” she questioned.

“Yeah, I kind of do feel *that* way,” he replied.

“You need to treat Yoo Ah-Young well to join the Blue Guild, right?” she asked.

“I’m basically already part of the guild, or I can also join a different guild. Who knew the woman I was going to throw away was actually a gem? It’s a good thing I had spent some time with her in the tutorial dungeon,” he answered.

“Still, I would be careful if I were you. Of course, I don’t mind being with you like this… but aren’t you worried? Just settle down with her. She has a great body,” the girl suggested.

“It doesn’t matter if she has a great body. She’s too boring. She may be wife material, but I don’t want to date her. You understand, right?” he asked.

“Then who do you want to date?” the girl questioned.

“Is that what you wanted to hear? Of course, I’ll date you, you bitch,” Kim Ki-Chul told her.

“Alright…”

When the couple started kissing, I started to feel queasy, but it probably wasn’t as bad as what Yoo Ah-Young was feeling right now. I guess she *definitely* had some expectations when they started talking about her because she was staring at them. However, the closer the couple got, the stronger the quivering of her body became. She unknowingly grabbed my hand, and she couldn’t stop crying.

‘Han Sora did the same… ’

I saw two women crying today, and I felt uncomfortable.

“Shall we leave?” I asked.

“…”

“I think it’s for the best if we do,” I suggested.

“Okay…” Yoo Ah-Young weakly muttered.

“Nothing good will come out if we stay here,” I added.

The couple was surprised, and they raised a fuss when the classroom door opened by itself, but I didn’t care because I just wanted to leave with Yoo Ah-Young.

Yoo Ah-Young’s condition was worse than Han Sora's. Unlike a moment ago when her tears had just dropped, she was now rubbing her face with her hands and was venting her emotions. When I patted her shoulders to comfort her, she hugged me.

‘I knew this was going to happen.’

“*Waaaaaaaah… heuuuk…*”

Of course, she resented Park Deok-Gu, and I started to get angry when I thought about how that love doctor was lying comfortably in his bed right now.

“*Waaaah… aaaaaah…*”

I guess she had been relying on Kim Ki-Chul even more than I thought. It had only been for a short period of time since they were in a tutorial dungeon, but I was sure she relied on him a lot, and she had gotten really close to him as a result. I couldn’t really relate, as I had never been backstabbed like that, but I could tell that Yoo Ah-Young was heartbroken.

She calmed down after some time.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

She was still sniffling, but she was a lot better than earlier. Her eyes were swollen, and I guess she still hadn’t calmed down just yet because she buried her face into my chest, but I noticed her nodding quietly. If she continued to hug me like this, Jung Ha-Yan, who was resting in Lindel, might suddenly make an appearance, so after carefully pulling her away from me, I continued talking.

“I don’t know what to say to make you feel better, but I’m sorry.”

“No… *sniff*. It’s fine. I was somewhat expecting it… If I think about it carefully, there were a lot of strange things about him,” Yoo Ah-Young said.

“I see…”

“I told myself that it wasn’t true, but seeing it with my own eyes… *heuk*…” she cried.

It felt like she was going to cry again. I couldn’t relate to her sadness, but I had no choice but to comfort her with words, as I knew that words would help her give me a positive answer. She had basically confirmed that she was going to join the Blue Guild, but there was one more unfinished business. However, this was something Park Deok-Gu had started, not me.

‘Revenge?’

Based on her status and nature, I didn’t think she would do it, but I was sure she wanted to get revenge for the betrayal.

‘I don’t think that she would want to kill or disable him, though… ’

Such a solution was suitable for Jung Ha-Yan, Lee Ji-Hye, and Cha Hee-Ra, but it didn’t fit *babies* like this woman.

I did think of a good idea, but the planning alone was bothersome. However, it wasn’t a bad idea since it could be a service to a man that was going to have a family soon…

‘I think it’ll be kind of fun… ’

That was when I thought it wouldn’t be a bad idea to have some fun since I had been working hard recently. Then, I heard Yoo Ah-Young talking, and she sounded determined.

“I’ll join the Blue Guild.”

‘Nice.’

“You made a good choice. There’s an old saying that success is the best revenge, and I’m sure your ex-boyfriend will be jealous of you in the future. I’ll make sure we offer you the best salary,” I told her.

“Okay, but that wasn’t my intention, though,” she said.

“I’m sure he’ll beat himself up for abandoning and making fun of you,” I stated.

“Thank you… for the compliment,” she thanked.

“I’m just speaking the truth. Miss Yoo Ah-Young, you’re talented, beautiful, and smart. That idiot in the classroom isn’t worth your time, and if you’re okay with it, I’d like to recommend a plan for getting back at him… Of course, you can consider this as a gift for joining the guild,” I added.

“What? No, there’s no need…”

“Let’s date temporarily,” I suggested.

“What…?” she asked.

“It’ll only be for a few days, so you don’t have to worry. Even dating until the end of the training period is fine, too. Basically, we’re going to create a situation where another man had stolen the woman whom Kim Ki-Chul thought belonged to him,” I explained.

“…”

“On top of that, she was stolen by a man who’s better than him in many ways. Sex appeal, wealth, power…” I added.

“*Ah*…”

I was sure she understood what I was talking about. She was probably just going to carry the sadness all by herself, but when I explained the plan, she looked interested. This was why psychology was interesting.

The scene Yoo Ah-Young had just seen was *definitely* shocking, and even though she was still sad, I was sure a part of her was starting to get filled with negative feelings—like revenge.

‘That could also be the reason why she agreed to join the Blue Guild so fast.’

Rather than crying even after joining the guild, it was probably better for her to let

go of him once and for all. If she suppressed it all inside, she could later explode because of it.

'I don't think it'll ruin her personality like it did with Ha-Yan and Miss Hee-Young.'

I guess you could say that it was a *cute* revenge.

I saw Yoo Ah-Young nodding.

"I… I look forward to working with you, sir," she muttered.

Since we were going to do it—we might as well do it right…

'I should go see Smartie and summon Whitefall as well… '

It was because an *excellent* car was a good way of hurting a bastard's pride.

CHAPTER 218
A CUTE REVENGE (3)

With Yoo Ah-Young being the last one, the Red Mercenary and the Blue Guild had used all of their priority negotiation rights. The Blue Guild did have one more left, but the problem was that we didn't think there was a need to use it, and since we knew it was rude to make other guilds and clans wait any longer, we had no choice but to open up the transfer market. Naturally, the clans and guilds that had been waiting anxiously came rushing into the training camp. Personally, the stats of the rookies this year weren't that great, but since the Red Mercenary Guild was in charge of the training, the reactions of the clans and guild were great.

'Everyone is in a good mood.'

Mid-sized guilds like the Blue Guild, Red Mercenary, Black Swan, and even the Devil's Guild weren't impressed by the trainees, but the smaller-sized guilds were happy about being able to recruit the trainees. Those who didn't have any potential were treated the same way, but those who could at least wield a sword got treated pretty well and thanks to the Red Mercenary Guild, a recruitment boom occurred at this training camp.

The Red Mercenary Guild shared information about the training camp and the trainees with the other clans and guilds, and they did the same to the trainees by providing information about the other clans and guilds. A guide that was like a catalog was being handed out, and the trainees would either discuss it during their break time or contemplate between the two catalogs. The information that the Red Mercenary Guild had kept under control was now spreading all over the place.

The training camp was pretty noisy despite the fact that the training period wasn't over yet. I was worried that it was going to affect the training, but nothing really happened. For the sake of getting noticed by the recruiters who visited the training camp several times a day, the trainees who hadn't received an offer just yet gave it their all during their training, and the trainees who had been chosen to join an organization were doing their best to increase their worth.

The completion ceremony was approaching, and excluding the training time,

everyone seemed a bit relaxed, but there was still some competition in the air, and it wasn't just the trainees who were competing. The other clans and guilds were also competing to the point that I thought maybe they were overdoing it. Basically, the recruitment war had started. They would either give gifts or talk badly about the other clans, and they would do whatever they could to increase the members of their organization. The guild masters and recruiters would wear luxurious clothes, and they would enter the training camp with a well-trained elite member to show off their power. They would then boast about the guild's cafeteria, the guild's benefits and budget, the quality of the dorms, and even the future plans of the guild.

It seemed effective, but the Blue Guild didn't bother to compete with them, and we also didn't even bother to hand catalogs out.

'There's no need for us to promote our guild.'

The Blue Guild's recruitment was over with Lee Chang-Ryeol and Yoo Ah-Young. Since we didn't need to recruit any other trainees, there was no need to create a presentation and promote our guild. Rumors were going to spread anyway within the training camp since information about our guild continued to *leak*.

After the market opened, this place no longer became a closed space. After reading the recruitment offer and information about the guilds, the trainees spoke with the recruiters, and during that, they discovered exactly what kind of position Kim Hyun-Sung and I were in, and naturally, *that* type of news spread like wildfire within the training camp. That rumor caused many to see me in a different light. Not only was I the Blue Guild's sub guild master, but I was also selected as one of the Eight Seats, was given the title of Honorary Bishop, and was also the Mercenary Queen's lover. From the titles I was proud of, I wasn't sure how many the trainees knew and how well they understood them, but I didn't bother thinking about it, as I was sure they had to be feeling something whenever they saw me recently.

As expected, I started to hear people whispering amongst themselves.

"That must be the griffon…"

"Does it belong to Mr. Lee Ki-Young?"

"I heard there's only four in Lindel… the guild masters of the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild each have one, and the guild master and sub guild master

of the Blue Guild have the remaining two…"

"Who did you hear that from?'

"From a noona from my clan…"

"*Aahhh*… so you decided to join them."

"Yeah. Thanks to them, I heard a lot of rumors, and I realized I shouldn't judge a book by its cover."

"That's amazing. With cars, you can at least figure out their value, but I heard a griffon's worth is difficult to quantify…"

"He was given the title of the Holy Empire's Honorary Bishop. I'm sure that's normal."

"What?"

"That's not all. Well, this hasn't been confirmed yet, but…"

These were the type of conversations they were having, and naturally, Whitefall wasn't the only thing I showed off. Luxury brands were in this world as well. I had been wearing my alchemy lab coat up until now, but since we were getting close to the end, I intentionally picked out expensive-looking clothes. I didn't think the trainees had the ability to tell the difference just yet, but since my clothes looked luxurious, I was enjoying the attention.

'Classes are almost over as well… '

There weren't any classes today, and since I came to the training camp due to personal reasons, I was used to this kind of attention. When I stood in front of the training camp door, I noticed the trainees either returning to their dorms or leaving the camp.

When I focused my mana on my ears, I heard voices.

"I guess it's today, too."

"I'm jealous…"

“I’m not…”

“Stop lying. I heard polygamy is common here…”

“But there’s no love…”

“If you have money, you’ll end up having love, you silly. This place is dangerous anyway… I’m sure you’ll be a thousand times happier being in the arms of Mr. Lee Ki-Young than in the arms of a beggar looking for love. Want to hear something ridiculous?”

“What is it?”

“I don’t know about you, but I prefer being Mansour’s third wife than being with a talented romanticist.”

“I can relate to that…”

“You’re not becoming the third wife of some parvenu, but the third wife of Mansour…”

I had done nothing but raised my hand to the trainees greeting me. Since I had created *that* kind of atmosphere myself, barely any trainees approached me. The few female trainees glancing at me didn’t bother talking to me, as they knew who I was waiting for, and after waiting for a bit, I saw Yoo Ah-Young slowly walking toward me with a smile.

‘Is she Moses or something?’

It only took a moment for the trainees to create a path for her. Unlike the first time, Yoo Ah-Young seemed pretty confident, and being burdened by attention and envy had become a thing of the past. I couldn’t help but laugh because she seemed like she was enjoying the attention. Many things had changed, but it probably wasn’t as much as the changes Yoo Ah-Young had gone through, and you could tell just by her outer appearance. The majority of the clothes she was wearing were luxury brands, and no one would think she was a trainee.

When I spoke while everyone was watching, I heard her answer immediately.

‘She really is a princess… ’

“Shall we get going?” I asked.

“Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” Yoo Ah-Young replied.

She didn’t look like she was acting when she smiled, and obviously, the majority of the things she was wearing were gifts from me, including the rings on her fingers. When I recalled the first time I gave her a gift, I chuckled, and it wasn’t because of Yoo Ah-Young’s reaction but the reaction of those around us.

Yoo Ah-Young continuously rejected the Blue Guild’s offer, and when I started sending her those types of gifts, everyone assumed it was a small bribe from the Blue Guild, but as time went on, they started to think they were more than just simple gifts.

‘Obviously… ’

It may not seem that way at first, but when she started to receive more and more gifts, even an idiot would change their mind about the situation, and naturally, a strange rumor started to spread within the training camp.

‘Mr. Lee Ki-Young is interested in the trainee named Yoo Ah-Young.’

That was how it started…

‘He wants to recruit her so that he can keep her by his side.’

There was *that* kind of rumor as well, but not all of them were positive rumors. It didn’t really matter to me since there had always been rumors about me being lustful anyway, but Yoo Ah-Young started to feel uncomfortable when she was suddenly being treated like a princess. Naturally, it only took a few days for everyone’s uncomfortable gazes to turn into envy because she was too high-leveled for them to criticize just because they were jealous. After all, expressing their jealousy would only work if they were on the same level as her.

From the trainees’ point of view, Yoo Ah-Young’s presence was so great that all they could do now was look up to her. Normally, there weren’t slaves that were jealous of the leader of a conglomerate. They were usually jealous of shackled slaves, not the people above them.[1]

Yoo Ah-Young was now used to grabbing my hand and getting on the griffon, and

when I laughed at how much she had changed, I immediately heard her talking.

“Does it… not look good on me?”

“No, it’s because you’ve become a natural,” I replied.

“It’s embarrassing hearing you say that,” she commented.

Despite saying that, I noticed her glancing down.

“How are you feeling?” I asked.

“I feel good. I was honestly skeptical when we were doing it for the first time, but I felt better than I thought, so I was surprised,” she answered.

“That’s a relief. Do you have anything special you need to report to me?” I asked her.

“A few people asked me if I’m really dating you, and they even asked stupid questions about Miss Jung Ha-Yan and what happened to her. They were surprised when I told them we weren’t dating yet,” she reported.

“I see…”

“And that man…” Yoo Ah-Young continued.

“Yes?” I asked.

“He said there was no need for me to see you anymore,” she finished.

“I guess he must be anxious, *haha*,” I laughed.

“He didn’t say it, but I’m sure he’s anxious. He even tried to make physical contact with me when he had never done that before… Of course, I felt annoyed, so I told him I was feeling sick and left, but… *pffft.* He was the one who told me I should get close to you, but now that we’re here, I guess he’s scared that I might abandon him. Because of that, the way he’s been trying to approach me recently has gotten annoying,” she complained.

The situation was obvious. Before sending her the gifts, Kim Ki-Chul had been telling her it wasn’t a bad idea to get close to me, but the fact that he was now telling her to

not meet me was proof that he was anxious.

'It would be strange if Kim Ki-Chul wasn't anxious… '

It was natural for him to think that way because a rich and competent man was trying to take away his only lifeline. I was the same way. If a smart guy started to get friendly with Kim Hyun-Sung, I would *definitely* get nervous as well.

"Do you know what else he said? He said I've changed recently, and he started scolding me that I wasn't the same Ah-Young he used to know. Honestly, I was so shocked that I wanted to pull his hair out," she added.

"You should've punched him," I told her.

"Can I really do that? The plan you told me…" she mumbled.

Yoo Ah-Young had also become more talkative.

'She's enjoying it.'

This part of the plan was the fun part, but it seemed like she was enjoying it more than I expected.

"You can do whatever you want. The plan I originally made was simply an outline… The most important part of this plan is helping you feel better, Miss Ah-Young," I reminded her.

"Okay!"

I heard her cheery voice.

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1. The author is figuratively saying that people are usually jealous of people of similar status. A slave isn't going to be jealous of their owner, they would usually be jealous of their fellow slave ☜

CHAPTER 219
A CUTE REVENGE (4)

Everything changed in just one day. It may sound cliched, but that was the best way to describe the current situation. I[1] was uncomfortable with the attention I was receiving, but after some time, I had gotten used to it. Obviously, I wasn't enjoying their jealousy because I knew better than anyone that all this was just an act. My situation wasn't important to me. The only thing I cared about was how the people's reaction would influence Kim Ki-Chul.

'Ass… hole.'

I tried not to think about it again, but it was frustrating how I couldn't get it out of my head. The nauseating sight and voice that I had seen and heard kept repeating in my head to the point that it was becoming unbearable—just imagining it was making me cry.

'It's annoying.'

I didn't like the fact that I had to feel these emotions because of him, and if I hadn't agreed to go along with this plan, I would have still been in my room crying all by myself. At first, I was skeptical about how doing this with Mr. Lee Ki-Young would help me, but it was definitely helpful. My heart felt like it was clogged up, and it felt good being freed from that feeling, even for a short moment. It felt like I had been relieved from the itchiness in my heart. I couldn't really describe the feeling, but the fact that it relieved me from frustration was the most important.

When I was walking toward my dorm, I heard a voice.

"Ah-Young."

It was obvious who it was.

"What?" I asked.

"What do you mean what? I came because I missed you," Kim Ki-Chul answered.

He looked relaxed, but his face and actions showed that he was anxious, and I almost cried when I saw him. I kept having negative thoughts, but I felt kind of relaxed, and it was probably because I could see this man's anxious face.

"You shouldn't be out at this hour. I know that trainees aren't allowed to leave their dorms after midnight…" I pointed out.

"Same goes for you…" he remarked.

"You know as well as I do that you and I are in different situations. I received permission to be out here, but you're here without permission," I told him.

"To be exact, I'm not here without permission. I have business I had to take care of as well," he corrected.

"What kind of business? Did you receive an offer from a guild?" I asked.

"Well, s-something like that," he stuttered.

"Which guild?" I questioned.

"It's from a mid-sized guild. I'm not sure if you know, but they're called the Giants Guild, and they're located in Castle Rock," he answered.

I have heard of them before. After their impressive performance during the Castle Rock defense war, they became one of the major guilds. Although I heard the Small Stone Guild was actually the guild that had significant power in Castle Rock…

'They became a major guild after a man named Song Jung-Wook sacrificed himself for Castle Rock… '

I couldn't remember the details, but I was sure that was what I had heard from Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Even though they weren't in Lindel, it was one of the guilds the majority of the trainees were aiming for, and since their entry requirement had become stricter recently, I didn't think it was a guild that Kim Ki-Chul could join with his grades.

'This is frustrating.'

At first, I wasn't sure why I was frustrated, but it didn't take me long to realize that it

was because I didn't want the man in front of me to succeed.

"I don't think you can join that guild with your grades," I said.

After realizing what I said, I thought maybe I was being a bit blunt, but after seeing the frown on his face, I felt my frustration slowly disappear.

'Ah… '

"With your grades, shouldn't you be looking for clans, Oppa?" I asked.

I knew I shouldn't be saying this, but I continued talking as if I were possessed. To get rid of my frustration, I talked bluntly without realizing it.

"If you're going to join them without any salary, it's better that you don't join them, Oppa. I heard this from Mr. Lee Ki-Young, and he said that you would most likely become a porter for monster corpses. You won't be able to join them as an actual guild member," I said.

"You…"

"I'm saying this all for you, Oppa. How much is your salary…"

"A lot," he replied.

"Really?" I doubted it.

"Yeah. When I told them I was going to go with you…"

"I never agreed to it. Why did you decide that on your own, Oppa?" I asked, cutting him off.

It was so ridiculous that I couldn't speak properly. I knew something was off, but I had never imagined that he would just confess what he had done like this.

"You're really going to join the Blue Guild?" he asked.

"What if I am? They promised to give me the best salary and treatment. Their benefits are better than the other guilds as well," I replied.

“What about us joining together…” he asked.

“I never said I would join the guild with you. That was all your idea, Oppa,” I said.

“Don’t you know that there are bad rumors about that guild? That man named Lee Ki-Young…” Kim Ki-Chul remarked.

“What about him? Aren’t you the one who told me that it would be good to get close to him? You told me to do that. And he definitely doesn’t seem like a bad person. That man is more amazing than you think, Oppa,” I explained.

“I’ve heard things, too. He has a complicated relationship with women, so it’s clear what kind of person he is. The power Mr. Lee Ki-Young had obtained… Do you really think he used a fair method to obtain it? He’s nothing but an alchemist,” he retorted.

I wanted to tell him, *‘You’re the same as him,’* but I decided to keep it in.

“We’re not even on Earth, so can that really be considered a flaw? I actually like it because he’s proud of it. He’s not doing it discreetly and everyone knows about it… I heard people with power are usually like that,” I responded.

“So… you’re saying you like that about him?” he questioned.

“It’s not that I like that about him, but it’s not bad either. That man… he’s capable and is worthy of doing something like that,” I answered.

“Don’t think that the attention Mr. Lee Ki-Young is giving you is genuine, Ah-Young. You don’t know how the world works because you’re too nice, but all of that is—”

“Is it really important whether he’s genuine or not? What do you think is the total cost of all the clothes that I’m wearing? You probably don’t know, Oppa. Even if you work all your life, you wouldn’t be able to afford even a single article I’m wearing. I thought they were just ordinary items, but this ring, I was told that it costs twenty thousand gold,” I interrupted him.

The deeper this man frowned, the more relieved I felt. In addition, I knew exactly what he was feeling.

‘Inferiority complex.’

“Did you sleep… with…”

“You really make assumptions based on what you see… You think I sold my body or something?” I asked.

“Tell it to me straight. Yoo Ah-Young, did you…”

“What if I did?” I retorted.

He frowned again, and I started shaking when I felt goosebumps on my back. I could feel the ball of frustration inside me being relieved at once. I thought that maybe I shouldn’t be doing this, but like an alcoholic craving for alcohol, I couldn’t stop.

“You!” Kim Ki-Chul shouted.

“That man… it’s not just his wealth and power that’s amazing,” I started.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“In every aspect, you can’t even be compared to him, Oppa. Do I really need to spell it out? This is the first time I was happy I was born a woman,” I answered.

“Yoo Ah-Young!” he screamed.

I saw his bloodshot eyes and trembling face.

‘So this is what he meant.’

I recalled what Mr. Lee Ki-Young told me earlier.

‘Guys like him would usually end up foaming at the mouth upon discovering that the woman he thought belonged to him was stolen by another man.’

At first, I didn’t really understand what those words meant, but when I saw how this man reacted, I finally understood what Mr. Lee Ki-Young meant. The goosebumps on my back were still there, but it felt like the frustration building up inside me had exploded all at once.

‘I feel better.’

I thought maybe I could be a bit more straightforward, so I was about to speak, but a thought popped into my head.

'Is it okay for me to end it here?'

Usually, I wouldn't have that kind of thought, but I wanted to see this man suffer for a little longer. I wanted to make him suffer even more. Similar thoughts started popping into my head.

'I was suffering, too.'

I was heartbroken.

'He needs to suffer as well.'

Only then would it be fair…

'You need to know what it feels like to be abandoned.'

I heard Mr. Lee Ki-Young's voice again. I knew he didn't mean much by it, but for some reason, it kept repeating in my head.

'You should continue the revenge until you're feeling better. People who say that they feel uncomfortable or that there's no point are people who have never experienced a proper revenge. If you do it properly, you'll actually feel like you have been freed.'

I felt like I could fly, and I wanted to feel this emotion a little longer. I wanted to enjoy it while I could. In the end, I spoke while looking at this man.

"I only said it because I was angry. I have never done it with him."

"You…"

It was only for a moment, but he seemed relieved.

"…"

"…"

"Ah-Young," he called out.

“What?” I asked.

“You’ve been acting strange recently,” he answered.

“…”

“Is it because I made you upset? Is it because I suggested we should spend some time apart?” he asked.

“I don’t know…” I mumbled.

“I suggested it for you. I believed in the potential you had, and I thought maybe I was getting in your way. But seeing you now, I think I have been neglecting you too much recently,” he explained.

Bullshit. He was lying.

“I’m sorry, Ah-Young,” he apologized.

“…”

However, I couldn’t stop smiling. I wasn’t smiling because of his genuine apology. I was smiling because my heart started racing at the thought that I would be able to feel *that* emotion again.

“I don’t want to see you right now,” I stated.

“I'm really sorry, but please keep this one thing in mind. I love you,” Kim Ki-Chul confessed.

“I’ll leave first,” I told him.

“Ah-Young! Yoo Ah-Young!” he yelled.

“Also…”

“*Huh?*”

“I accept your apology, Oppa. Let’s… eat together tomorrow,” I suggested.

When I turned my head slightly and suggested, I saw Kim Ki-Chul smile. And it made me feel a tingling sensation on my back.

* * *

I[2] was sitting on the sofa that was on one side of Cha Hee-Ra's room. I was reviewing some documents when I heard a voice next to me.

"You still haven't picked a rearguard, darling?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"Yeah. We need to create a second party, but there aren't any useful trainees. I wanted to recruit a rookie, but it looks like I'm going to have to recruit an experienced player," I answered.

"There will be some mages leaving the Devil's Guild soon, so wait for a bit. As long as they don't renew their contracts… We're thinking about bringing a few of them with us as well, so you should look into them," she suggested.

"I actually wanted to recruit someone I could train from the beginning till the end. Someone like a blank canvas," I told her.

"*Ah*, that's always good, and that's also the reason why people recruit rookies…" she commented.

There wasn't anything wrong with experienced players, but having two more rookies to grow with the party would be better. I had been constantly using Mind's Eye recently, but no one had caught my attention, so it would probably be difficult to recruit a rookie I liked. I knew there weren't a lot of useful mages because they had to have an understanding of magic, talent, and the desperation to put in the effort. I would have recruited a mage if they were half as good as Jung Ha-Yan.

"*Whew*…"

"Despite being busy, you must be having fun playing around like that," she said.

"It's pretty fun," I agreed.

"It's really up to you, but… you're going to tell your second girlfriend about Yoo Ah-Young's case, right?" Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

"*Ah*… yeah. Ha-Yan is in Lindel right now, so I think it should be okay. Are you okay with it, noona?" I asked.

"I like these kinds of jokes. They're kind of fulfilling, and it's not like there are a lot of exciting things going on around here, anyway… I'm too successful to receive that kind of princess treatment, so I won't have the chance to experience a situation like that. However, the vicarious satisfaction is there thanks to her," she explained.

"Do you want to receive the princess treatment?" I questioned.

"You're getting close to crossing the line," she warned.

When I smiled, I noticed her calming down right away, but I did flinch a bit. We were talking as equals, but Cha Hee-Ra was still scary.

'It's because of that incident… '

It was natural for me to show that kind of reaction because I could still vividly remember how she charged at me like a madwoman with bloodshot eyes, all the while drooling.

"You're thinking of that incident." Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

"I wasn't… noona," I mumbled.

"I can tell from your expression. Didn't I tell you to forget about it?" she questioned.

"It's not that easy…" I confessed.

When I was giving her an excuse, a guild employee opened the door and reported to give a report. I sent out a message a few days ago asking them to come, so I guess they had arrived.

I felt happy when I thought I could see Smartie again.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young. You… have a guest," the employee said.

"Please take them to my room. Let them know I'll be there shortly," I ordered.

"Well… the door is small, so I don't know if they'll fit…" they mentioned.

“What?” I asked.

“I’m sorry to say this, but you should probably go check yourself,” they suggested.

“*Huh?* There’s no need… Isn’t Dialugia with them? I don’t understand what you’re saying…” I told them.

“*Kyaaaaaaaaaaahhh!*”

The loud screech was different from usual. Naturally, I headed toward the direction where I heard the sound, and when I looked out the window, I saw an unfamiliar monstrous creature.

‘Smartie?’

It was like a large dog; no, it was more like a beast. I doubted my eyes for a second.

‘Smartie… how did you grow so big?’

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1. Yoo Ah-Young’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 220
A GROWN-UP SMARTIE (1)

Even after rubbing my eyes and looking at it again, it was still Smartie. Dialugia, who was standing and looking around, had come with Smartie, but I couldn't take my eyes off Smartie. The last time I saw Smartie, it was as big as a puppy, and I was shocked when I saw how it had become as big as a tiger. At this point, Smartie had become scary rather than cute. It was sniffing around as if its surroundings were interesting, and then it looked at me. At that moment, I thought maybe I should have worn some armor because I saw an indescribable emotion in its eyes.

"*Kyaaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

It screeched and violently nodded its head while drooling, which worried me. Smartie was still doing the same actions it had gotten used to when it was still a baby, but I was worried that Smartie had started to see me as food. Its propeller-like tail was intimidating, but I was excited to see Smartie. It had also been a while since I had seen my child, so I thought I shouldn't neglect it.

Dialugia had to be angry because she was frustrated by the fact that I wasn't there when Smartie was growing up, so welcoming them with open arms was the best thing to do here.

"*Ah*… Smartie…"

When I spoke, I saw it charging toward me.

"*Pant, pant! Pant!*"

'What's wrong with Smartie?'

"*Kyaaaaah!*"

It ran towards me pretty fast, so I had to assume a stance.

Before I could think about how I was going to catch it, it jumped on me, and its heavy

weight caused me to naturally fall to the ground.

"*Kyah! Pant, pant! Kyaaaah! Pant, pant!*"

The pain only lasted for a moment because when I saw its eyes filled with tears, I started to feel bad.

"*Kyaaaaaah! Pant, pant! Pant, pant!*"

Tears started to fall from its eyes and seeing it wagging its tail like a propeller proved that it was indeed Smartie.

"Hey!" I called out.

"*Kyaaaah!*"

"Have you been doing well, Smartie?" I asked.

"*Pant! Pant!*"

Not only did it start licking me, but it kept sniffing me. I couldn't hold it in my arms like before, but I did hug and stroke it here and there.

"Good job! You're so good!" I complimented it.

"*Kyah! Pant! Kyah! Pant! Kyah! Pant!*"

Smartie still jumped around whenever I clapped.

"Cute.'

Smartie looked at me as if it was asking me to give it an airplane ride, but I wasn't strong enough to lift it up. Upon seeing us interact with each other, Dialugia slowly approached us.

"Smartie grew pretty fast," I commented.

"When you're with her all the time, you don't really notice it. I have finally noticed how careless you have been with our Dialuria," Dialugia said.

“I was kind of busy. I did think about returning home, but things didn’t work out, and I had to work hard for our nest. I have been sending food for Smartie every time, though, so I’ll be kind of sad if you keep scolding me like this,” I told her.

“Just because you have been doing the bare minimum doesn’t mean you have fulfilled your role as a father. Being next to Dialuria is more important. Think about how lonely she has been all this time. It missed you so much that she even started crying. Are you okay, Dialuria?” she asked.

“*Kyaaah!*”

“I’m not mad at your father, Dialuria. We’re just talking. I’m not scolding him and we’re not fighting, my lovely daughter,”[1] she added.

“*Kyah!*”

“I won’t ask you to stay with her every day, but you should stay with her at least once a week; no, once every three days at least. Also, I’m going to start teaching her how to hunt, so you need to be with her during those times no matter what. It’s Dialuria’s first hunt and it’ll be helpful if her father is there,” she requested.

“I see. Of course, I’ll be there, but if you could tell me these things ahead of time…”

“That’s why I’m telling you now,” she interrupted me.

I understood why she was kind of dissatisfied and seeing Smartie cry *did* break my heart. In terms of time, I didn’t think that a lot of time had gone by, but I was sure it wasn’t the same for Smartie. As she continued licking me, a thought popped into my head.

‘It’s directly connected to my survival.’

“Will she grow bigger?” I asked.

“No, she’ll maintain this size for a few months. She may grow little by little, but it’ll take a long time for her to grow even bigger,” Dialugia replied.

“*Ahhh*…”

Smartie’s life might actually be in danger if she grew even bigger.

“It’ll be a bit difficult to handle,” I commented.

“She’ll learn how to transform and talk,” she added.

“*Oh!* Like you?” I asked.

“Of course. It’s normal for dragons to take a while, but our Dialuria is smart,” she answered.

Whether it was on here or on Earth, every parent always thought their child was smart.

I tried to get up because I thought I shouldn’t keep rolling on the ground, but despite getting up, Smartie continued to jump around and kept trying to get on top of me.

‘Ugh… ’

Obviously, she couldn’t get on me so easily.

‘You’re heavy.’

My strength had increased a lot, so I was a lot stronger than most ordinary adult males, but it still wasn’t easy to handle this kind of weight. Despite that, Smartie looked like she didn’t want to give up, so in the end, she hung onto me as if I was giving her a piggyback ride. Her hind legs and tail were wrapped around my waist, and her fore legs were around my chest and left shoulder while she placed her head on my right shoulder and screeched.

“Shall we stay together today, Smartie?” I asked.

“*Pant! Pant!*”

At this point, I had to use my mana, and using it helped a little bit. That was when I heard a voice from outside.

“Is she Dialuria? Or was it Smartie? Darling?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“*Kyaaaaah!*”

I wasn’t sure why, but Smartie looked at the red-headed woman and screeched, but

the sound was different from her usual screech. It wasn't because she was in a good mood. It was more like she was being hostile toward Cha Hee-Ra.

'What's wrong with her?'

"*Kyaaaaaaah! Kyah!*"

"Smartie is cute, darling! You really were chosen by a dragon. I knew it after seeing the nest in Lindel, but it's more convincing seeing you like this," she commented.

The closer she got, the more Smartie lowered her head. She instinctively sensed that the woman in front of me was dangerous. Her quick-witted side *definitely* resembled me, but I obviously hadn't made any contributions to Smartie's genetics. Still, I couldn't help but think about it sometimes.

"She's really cute. Look at how she lowered her head. Smartie looks weak, darling." Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

Smartie was acting like this because Cha Hee-Ra was reaching for her. However, Dialugia stopped her before she could pat Smartie.

"Can't you see that she's scared? Please step back."

"*Ah*…"

After looking up and down at Dialugia, Cha Hee-Ra stared at her horns for a moment before she started talking.

"*Oh,* you must be… Dialugia?"

"Yes, and you are?" Dialugia asked.

"You can call me Cha Hee-Ra. I had no idea she was scared… my bad. I'm sorry, Smartie. And I'm sorry, Dialugia," she apologized.

"I-It's fine… I was being a bit sensitive…" Dialugia responded.

Seeing that side of Cha Hee-Ra was a bit surprising, and seeing her looking at Smartie made me think that she liked cute things. Of course, Smartie was too grown up to be considered cute, but it was strange to see her trying to be nice to Smartie.

'Does she like children?'

She immediately apologized when Dialugia stopped her, and I may be rude for saying this, but she reminded me of a gorilla that was taking care of a baby. Seeing Cha Hee-Ra apologize to Dialugia made me think that she was still a woman at heart. Although Dialugia was on edge, she also looked shocked.

"I've heard a lot about you. It's nice to meet you. It's okay if I talk casually, right?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"I don't really mind…" Dialugia replied.

It seemed like they were getting along well.

"You're going to the training camp, right, darling?" she asked.

"*Huh?* Oh yeah," I answered.

"Dialugia? How about you and I rest for a bit?" she suggested.

"What? But… I need to look after my child…"

"It'll only be for a moment, and our darling will look after Smartie. His workplace isn't far from here, anyway, so you can run to him if something happens. What do you say?" she asked.

"But…"

"Let's have some tea and talk. You look like you really need a break right now," Cha Hee-Ra added.

I agreed. The hesitant Dialugia seemed like she wanted to rest as well. I wasn't sure if it was just me, but there were bags under her eyes. Her smooth skin and hair looked messy and dull—even the color of her horns looked washed.

'I wonder if she's tired.'

Of course, she was exhausted. It didn't matter even if her stamina was over 100 points…

'Parenting is difficult.'

Smartie may be calmly hanging from my back right now, but once she started to run wild, I was certain it would be difficult to calm her down. Raising a human was hard, so I was sure raising a dragon was even more difficult. Obviously, I started to feel guilty, so I had no choice but to say something.

"I think you should rest for a bit, Dialugia. I'll look after Smartie for today."

Dialugia seemed relieved. After looking at Dialuria for a bit, she finally nodded.

"I'll leave it up to you then," she said.

"Don't worry," I assured her.

"You're going to be with Daddy all day, Smartie. Okay?" I asked.

"*Kyah! Pant, pant!*"

"But if you don't listen, I'm sending you back home, so you have to stay quiet," I warned her.

"*Kyaaaah!*"

She *definitely* understood what I said because she nodded violently, and Dialugia looked like she was happy with this arrangement.

"We'll be heading out now," I told them.

"Okay…"

'I'm sure nothing will happen.'

The fact that I had been chosen for the Eight Seats was something the majority of the trainees already knew, and it also included the fact that I was chosen by a dragon. I was sure some of the trainees were suspicious about whether it was true or not, but I was certain that I would receive a lot more attention today.

'Even if Smartie is still a baby… '

Her stats were incredible.

[Checking Legendary-Ranked Named Monster Black Dragon Dialuria's Status Window.]

[Name - Dialuria]

[Title - Smartie]

[Age - 1]

[Nature - ???]

[Race - Dragon]

[Stats]

[Strength - 32/Above legendary growth limit]

[Agility - 32/Above legendary growth limit]

[Stamina - 33/Above legendary growth limit]

[Intelligence - 10/Above legendary growth limit]

[Endurance - 41/Above legendary growth limit]

[Luck - 32/Below legendary growth limit]

[Magic - 40/Above legendary growth limit]

[Overall Review - She's very excited. You're lucky that you can be the father of such a being. Please be careful.]

‘She hasn’t unlocked her nature yet.’

Her endurance was 41, while her magic was 40 points. To put it bluntly, even if the attack team attacked Smartie all at once, they wouldn’t be able to defeat her. Obviously, she couldn’t fight right now because she still couldn’t control her body and mana, but she *did* have the instinct, so I was confident that she was well above them.

‘There are still about three days left until the completion ceremony… ’

I decided to spend more time with Smartie once this training camp was over.

‘Yoo Ah-Young’s plan is almost reaching its end as well… ’

I recently saw her spending time with Kim Ki-Chul, so I guess she really wanted to go all out in backstabbing him when it was time. I told her she could do whatever she wanted, but I had never imagined that she would plan something like this. I guess this side of her was hidden behind her optimistic and easygoing personality.

When I entered the training camp while having various thoughts, I felt people staring at me, and obviously, I also heard them whispering.

“Isn’t that… a dragon?”

“Really?”

“Wow… I didn't think the rumors were real… Some people really have all the luck in the world. I wish I were chosen for something.”

“I’m sure he got that dragon from a goblin or something.”

These were the types of comments I heard, but the strangest part of this situation was…

‘What’s wrong with her?’

Smartie was calmly hanging from my back, and she didn’t cause any trouble even when a male trainee passed us by.

‘What’s going on?’

But, whenever a female trainee passed us by, she would foam at the mouth and growl at them.

"*Kyaaah!*"

To make things worse, Smartie would show them her fangs as if warning them not to get closer, so I knew something was wrong. She looked around as if to see whether someone was approaching us or not. It was ridiculous, but I had seen that gaze before.

'Jung Ha-Yan?'

Smartie was showing the same attitude Jung Ha-Yan had always been showing.

'It's probably just a coincidence.'

I activated Mind's Eye just in case.

[Check Legendary-Ranked Named Monster Black Dragon Dialuria's Unique Habit.]

[Twisted and Dangerous Love in the Dark][#Silly Father Complex][#Mommy is Frustrating Too]

"*Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

"Th-This is crazy…"

I realized ahead of time that Diaugia had failed at raising our child.

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1. We finally know Smartie's gender ☜

CHAPTER 221
A GROWN-UP SMARTIE (2)

When I rubbed my eyes and looked down at the status window again, the result was still the same.

[Checking Legendary-Ranked Named Monster Black Dragon Dialuria's Unique Habit.]

[Twisted and Dangerous Love in the Dark]

[#Silly Father Complex][#Mommy is Frustrating Too]

'What's this?'

I became flustered because my assumption was correct, and I had a hard time understanding the situation. Smartie did seem a bit clingy, but I had never imagined she would grow up this way.

'This... '

This was so ridiculous that I was at a loss for words. However, the fact that I had been away for so long could be the cause. I thought I loved and cherished her, but since we had been apart for a long time, it was possible that she had unlocked a strange habit thanks to that.

'And what's with the hashtags?'

Smartie was everything to her mom, and for her to say that about her mom would break her heart, but one thing I felt relieved about was that her nature hadn't been decided just yet…

'Can you change a habit that's already been created?'

Naturally, I was worried, so all I could do was pray that a decent nature would appear. It seemed a bit late, but I had to focus all of my energy on her education.

'I'll change her habit if I can… and I need to pick the best and safest nature for her.'

That was how I could change this extreme situation.

I wasn't sure if Smartie knew how I was feeling, but I knew she was being wary of her surroundings because she had her eyes wide open.

"Be nice," I warned.

"*Pant, pant!*"

"You shouldn't threaten other people," I added.

"*Kyah!*"

"You can only be with me if you stay quiet. If you don't, I'll send you straight back to Mom. Got it?" I asked.

"*Kyaaaah!*"

Smartie looked dissatisfied, but I guess she didn't want to go back to her mom because she nodded repeatedly. It was natural for her to react this way since it had been a while since we had seen each other, but she wasn't like her usual cute self. If I had a choice, I would have sent her back to Dialugia already, but when recalling how exhausted Dialugia looked, I couldn't do that. Controlling Smartie by somewhat threatening her like this was the best I could do, but every time female trainees walked by, she would start shaking and put her guard up. The way Smartie blinked her large eyes and snorted had to have looked cute to others because they showed interest in her, but I knew she would bite them if they got close.

When I entered the classroom while having different thoughts, I saw the trainees looking at me kind of nervously. When I took my seat, I saw them greeting me.

"Hello, Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

"Nice to meet you all," I greeted.

Obviously, their attitude toward me had changed compared to before. I was sure it was because of the information they had heard about me, but another reason was that the majority of them wanted alchemy to be their main job. The more they looked into it, the more they realized how unique my position was in this field. There would always be someone stronger than Cha Hee-Ra on this continent and mages more experienced in magic than Jung Ha-Yan, but from what I knew, an experienced alchemist still didn't exist within this continent—especially among the players.

Dragon Alchemist was a unique legendary-ranked job. There may be people who have a better understanding of alchemy than me, but when it came to dragons, I was unrivaled. Basically, they once saw me as a nobody with a production-type job, but now, I was an important figure that had climbed to the top with alchemy alone. I changed their perception of alchemy because I had been selected as a seatholder for the Eight Seats, and since the trainees were focused on the class, I was sure at least one or two of them would admire me.

'Even I think it's kind of amazing… '

Unlike at the start of the training camp, they were writing down every word I was saying, and even Han Sora, who was sitting in the far back, was focused as if she didn't want to miss a single piece of information. Unfortunately, I wasn't planning on giving a lesson today.

"There's no class today," I announced.

"*Ah*…"

The trainees seemed disappointed, and despite it being alchemy experiment time, which was their favorite part of the class, I had nothing else I could teach them. It was up to them to progress from here.

"There are only three days left until the completion ceremony, and I have taught you everything I can regarding the basics. Those that have already unlocked the alchemist job will know this already, but the knowledge I gave you is a lot more than the basic knowledge that you'll obtain upon unlocking the job," I started.

'Even though what I taught them was from Ramus Tucker's Introduction to Alchemy… '

There was advanced knowledge written in the epic-ranked book as well. If the trainees followed half of the lessons, no, even just a quarter, they wouldn't have any

problems making a living.

“Even if you participate in the alchemy experiment today, it won’t make that big of a difference because starting now, you’ll have to study on your own. I showed you the path up to this point, so now, it’s up to you on how you want to grow,” I continued.

A male trainee focused on my lesson asked a question.

“Then, today’s class is…”

“It’ll be kind of fun. *Hm*… I’ll answer any questions you have because this will probably be more helpful. You can ask any question you want,” I informed them.

“*Ah*!”

I saw them nodding, and even though I wasn’t sure what kind of questions they were going to ask, I was sure the majority of them were going to be academic questions. But, the first question surprised me. However, when I thought about it, it was obvious that they would ask that question.

“I-in that case, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. If it’s okay, could I ask about the creature on your back?”

I was sure the trainees were bothered by Smartie staring at them, and since I didn’t mind answering, I started talking.

“It’s a dragon.”

“*Ah*…”

I could hear them whispering.

“My name is Kim Min-Young, and I’m a trainee expected to join the Devil’s Guild. *Um*… I heard about the dragon that selected you, so is that dragon…”

“The dragon that selected me is the mother of this baby. If you go to Lindel, I’m sure you’ll see it for yourselves because there’s a large nest on the outskirts of the city. The nest is several times bigger than this training camp,” I replied.

“Wow…”

“I’d like to tell you more, but the majority of the information related to dragons is top secret. The empire is controlling the information, and there’s no reason for us to stop them. However, basic information about them has already been released to the public. Anyway, no more questions about the dragon. Any other questions?” I asked.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young?”

“Yes?”

“If you don’t mind me asking… about the… Mercenary Queen…”

“Yes, it’s true that we’re together,” I interrupted.

‘You call that a question?’

The one who asked was the oldest of the scummy three sisters. It seemed they had no idea just how precious this time was.

“D-Do you plan on getting more girlfriends?”

The next question was even worse. They had to be thinking that this was a question and answer session between them and their high school homeroom teacher. I wasn't sure why the three sisters were curious about that, but unfortunately, I wasn’t interested in them.

“*Kyaaaah!*”

Smartie had to be frustrated by their questions because she glared at them and screeched. I was kind of annoyed, but…

‘I told them they could ask anything.’

It was a sin being dumb enough not to know how precious this time was, as they had basically thrown away their chance to receive useful tips.

After giving a short answer, I waited for the next question.

“I am.”

That was when Han Sora raised her hand.

“My name is Han Sora. You… said just now that we need to study this field on our own from now on… I’d like to know exactly what you meant by that.”

“Okay.”

‘Nice.’

It was the most practical question.

“Are you asking about how you can grow?” I asked.

“It’s embarrassing to answer, but yes,” Han Sora replied.

I was sure she felt lost.

“*Hm*… Basically, you can think of it as joining an advanced course. Let’s say that the material we’re learning and studying right now is a car. All of you now know what a car is. You know what it looks like and what it does…” I started.

“Yes.”

“Let’s turn it into something more specialized. Yes, I said specialized. Now that you know what a car is, you just need to focus more and dig deeper and it’s up to you to decide which side you want to dig deeper into,” I continued.

“*Ah*…”

“Some will study the outer appearance of cars and others will study more about the engine and the internal parts. Some may even change their field of specialization because they thought about studying motorcycles. Alchemy is the same. You just need to specialize in something,” I added.

“…”

“Potions, homunculus, chimera, and catalysts are part of alchemy and of course, there are bound to be areas even I don’t know about,” I said.

“Can I ask which area you are specialized in, Mr. Lee Ki-Young?”

“Of course. I majored in biology first. I did study other areas, but my main research

started in potions and biological research. After that, I specialized in studying about dragons," I answered.

"*Ah*…"

"Being a pioneer in a specific field is pretty advantageous and those that look down on alchemy are people who aren't qualified to become alchemists. Look," I said.

When I slowly gathered mana to my hand, there was a crackle and magic sparked out of my hand. When I snapped lightly, a pair of dragon arms started forming on both sides of the blackboard that was behind me. They were probably aware that those weren't simple models. The size did shrink to fit the classroom, but when the arms started moving, the trainees turned pale.

"No… way…"

"*Huh?*"

They seemed to be in awe.

"How could… something like this… it's not possible. How is that possible?"

'Hard work, experience, job correction, the support of a genius mage and a devoted dragon, unlimited resources, and natural luck.'

Actually, the most important ones were the last three, but of course, I couldn't tell them that.

"It's kind of difficult for me to answer that question, but it's not an exaggeration to say that what you just saw is tied to my job. You'll find the answer if you think carefully about how alchemy isn't just a job, but a high-ranking mage job," I explained.

"*Ah*…"

"You may be able to make your crazy imaginations come to life. Some of you may be able to create a potion that'll turn you into a superhuman after drinking it, and others might actually create a homunculus or the Sage's Stone. Of course, there will be some who won't understand half of the information I have given them for their lifetime, but the last question was a great question, Miss Han Sora," I complimented.

“Th-Thank you,” she said.

“It seems like a lot of time has passed because of your useless questions, so I’ll wrap this up after saying a few words,” I announced.

“*Ah…*”

“You’ve done well,” I told them.

“…”

“The majority of you received offers from guilds and clans, right?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Some will join mid-sized to large guilds while others will join small clans, but it doesn’t matter because the important part is that Lindel needs all of you,” I continued.

“…”

“The reason why I started to teach here was that the city, no, the empire asked me to share some of the alchemy knowledge that I have. You’ll find the answer if you think about that. The world has changed. The empire needs alchemists, while the clans and guilds are thinking about investing more into alchemy and other production-type jobs,” I added.

“*Ah*…”

“All of you will become members of a project the empire has planned. I won’t tell you to stand out, but please don’t go outside and embarrass yourselves. If you don’t prove your worth, you’ll be thrown to the streets and will have to live as a beggar,” I warned.

I had no idea if they understood me or not, but the room suddenly got quiet. One thing I was sure of was that they were certainly having different thoughts.

“The reason why I taught all of you to the best of my abilities wasn’t that I liked all of you. It was because it was a national project. I’m sure you understand what I’m talking about,” I confessed.

“…”

“Don’t tarnish my name, everyone. And…” I paused.

“…”

“If you visit me when you’re having a hard time, I can at least give you some advice. Thank you for your hard work,” I informed them.

CHAPTER 222
A GROWN-UP SMARTIE (3)

I had mixed emotions, but if someone asked if I had grown fond of them, I would say no. The scummy three sisters hadn't exactly left a good impression on me, but I *did* grow fond of the hard-working trainees.

'I haven't grown that fond of them, though… '

Obviously, I wasn't willing to sacrifice myself for them, but I could buy them a meal when they were having a rough time, or I could also give them advice. This was the type of relationship a teacher should have with their students.

Even though I had warned them, I wasn't really worried.

'I'm sure they'll all find jobs.'

That was the thought I had. Excluding Han Sora and a few of the other trainees, almost all of the trainees had successfully joined mid to large-sized guilds, and this was the result I had expected, considering my goal when I taught them. My goal from the start was to train alchemists who would become useful, as there wasn't a reason for guilds and clans not to recruit knowledgeable alchemists. Even if the trainees' grades were just somewhat decent, they would still receive guild offers, and the ones with high magic or intelligence stats would have offers flooding in, which would certainly make them scream with joy. Of course, they wouldn't get paid as much as others with combat-type jobs, but they would still start out with decent pay despite it being a production-type job. As such, they would end up receiving better treatment than a mage who couldn't use their magic properly.

Incidentally, the majority of trainees who ignored our advice on the first day and chose a combat-type job ended up feeling miserable. Not only did they lack mana, but mages without enough understanding of magic had no place to go, and talentless warriors would just end up being monster food or a beggar.

As a result, an alchemy boom happened in Lindel, and despite the current situation, it was obvious why no one was recruiting Han Sora even though her grades were at

the top. It was all because of the rumor about her breaking into Jung Ha-Yan's magic lab and trying to steal Jung Ha-Yan's research.

"It's a sensitive topic…"

People like Han Sora would be rejected by groups. Of course, the truth was that she had used a ridiculously dirty trick on me, but it was more helpful for her to describe the incident this way rather than revealing that she had been trying to frame me for sexual assault. If the truth was revealed to the public, I was sure the guilds and clans that didn't want to be hated by the Blue Guild would try to kick her out.

'This is better for her.'

Even though Han Sora hadn't received any offers during the training period, if she applied and managed to score an interview, her chances of getting accepted would be high, as talented people would always be useful.

"Han Sora…"

Smartie screeched when I unknowingly mumbled her name.

"*Kyaaaaaaaah!*"

I scolded her immediately.

"Hey! Quiet!"

"*Kyah*…"

In situations like this, it was better to control her instantly. I had the same thought while looking at Jung Ha-Yan, but for people with this kind of nature and attitude, it was better to suppress them firmly from the start.

'I should write a book about this… '

I finally understood the behavioral pattern of these types of people.

When I slightly frowned, I noticed Smartie trying to read my expression. All I did was shout for a moment, but her large eyes were already filled with tears. I obviously felt guilty. However…

'As a father, you must be resolute.'

This unknown voice started ringing in my head.

"Dialuria."

"*Pant… pant…*"

"It's okay when it's just us two or when we're with Mom, but when there are other people, you have to be careful. If you're not careful, I can't stay with you, Dialuria," I explained.

"*Kyah!*"

"You're smart, so I'm sure you understand what Daddy is saying, right?" I asked.

"*Kyaaaaah!*"

I saw Yoo Ah-Young and Kim Ki-Chul walking this way, and I was worried that Kim Ki-Chul was going to foam at the mouth again, but he didn't show any reaction. The strong stance I was showing was effective. When I nodded after feeling that I had become a good test subject, Yoo Ah-Young spoke after seeing me.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young!"

The man next to her approached me uncomfortably, but he seemed elated.

"*Kya… kyaaah!*"

"Hey!" I warned.

Smartie became quiet after I warned her again.

"Miss Yoo Ah-Young and… Mr. Kim Ki-Chul," I greeted.

They seemed like they were getting along.

'Yoo Ah-Young can be pretty cruel.'

It was only a little bit, but I got goosebumps after thinking that all of this was just an

act. I was sure Kim Ki-Chul thought that he had gotten his girlfriend back, but that wasn't the case.

"Sir, I…"

"Have you thought about it?" I asked.

"No, not yet…" Yoo Ah-Young replied.

"That's unfortunate," I commented.

"Could I give you my answer during the completion ceremony?" she asked.

'You have already signed the contract… '

Her acting was on another level to the point that it was comparable to Ahn Ki-Mo's acting.

"Of course. By the way… you are…"

"Hello, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I'm Kim Ki-Chul. I'm Yoo Ah-Young's boyfriend," he introduced himself.

"*Aaah*, I've heard a lot about you," I said.

"So did I… I heard you have been taking care of Ah-Young. Thank you for looking after her," he thanked me.

"It's fine since it's not every day you find a talented player like Miss Yoo Ah-Young. It was only natural for me to do that. *Hahaha*… you two look good together," I complimented.

"It's because we have had a bit of a misunderstanding recently…" he answered.

When I started making provocative remarks, Kim Ki-Chul started looking at me strangely. He was feeling inferior. He was looking at Smartie, who was growling while hanging from my back, and was envious of the vibe I was giving off with the clothes I was wearing.

'Tsk, tsk.'

After seeing his face, I finally understood why people considered the jealousy of a man to be disgraceful. When I turned to Yoo Ah-Young, she looked like she was in a good mood.

'She won't turn weird either, right?'

At this point, I started to get kind of worried, but in Ah-Young's case, she wasn't in the danger zone just yet because in my opinion, this was nothing but a cute revenge. However, I was kind of bothered by the fact that I wasn't the only person looking at her. The danger, Smartie, was pretty close to her as well.

"*Kyaaah*…"

That was when the slow-witted Yoo Ah-Young started to move a bit more aggressively.

"So this is the Dialuria you mentioned before."

"That's right, Miss Yoo Ah-Young," I replied.

"S-she's cute. Can I touch her?" she asked.

Not only did Ah-Young push her chest against me, but her voice had also become higher, and she was obviously trying to signal her sexual attraction to me. I was worried that Smartie was going to become violent, but I guess this amount of distance was fine, as she remained calm. She did start shaking not long after, but she wasn't trying to attack Yoo Ah-Young.

Kim Ki-Chul actually looked more worked up than Smartie because he was sending me hostile vibes as he looked at me while biting his lips.

"She doesn't really like it when other people touch her. It'll be better if you spend more time with her later so you can get close to her quickly," I suggested.

"Really?" she asked.

"Yes. Are you available tomorrow night?" I asked.

Kim Ki-Chul answered in her place.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young, tomorrow, Ah-Young is—”

“Of course, Mr. Lee Ki-Young!” Yoo Ah-Young interrupted.

“Ah-Young…” Kim Ki-Chul muttered.

“I’m available, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” she added.

“*Haha*. That’s a relief,” I commented.

“Sir! Since we’re meeting anyway… could I… ask you for another favor?” she asked hesitantly.

‘What kind of request is it this time?’

I didn’t really know what she wanted to request, but I had a feeling of what it was as soon as she asked. She was blushing, and she also seemed anxious from the excitement. I was actually the one who got flustered, as she kept sending me strange signals.

‘Genius.’

There was a saying that vengeance knew no bounds, and this acting where it seemed like we were going to do something sexual was more intense than Ahn Ki-Mo’s acting.

‘She’s really worth recruiting.’

Yoo Ah-Young probably had no idea she had this kind of talent, and I guarantee that if she received proper lessons from Ahn Ki-Mo, she would receive Lindel’s Best Actress award.

“I… really liked the thing you told me about last time…” she added.

‘What did you like? We haven’t done anything.’

My embarrassment from the sudden situation only lasted for a moment, as I couldn’t help but play along with the type of acting she was doing—the kind of acting that pulled people in.

“Of course, Miss Ah-Young. I should be the one to make that request because just being with you is enjoyable for me. I’ll be sure to teach you the things I wasn’t able to teach you last time,” I told her.

“Really?” she asked.

“Yes, but Mr. Ki-Chul is here…” I pointed out.

“No, you don’t have to worry about him. He doesn’t seem to know much, anyway… and you’re a better teacher as well. I’ll see you tomorrow, sir. We’ll head back first!” she said excitedly.

“Okay.”

I would probably just have dinner with her tomorrow and then send her home a little later than usual, but Kim Ki-Chul seemed to be thinking otherwise.

“Wh-What is it? Do you have to meet him tomorrow?” Kim Ki-Chul asked.

“*Ahhh*… it’s none of your business, Oppa,” Yoo Ah-Young replied.

“What? How could you say that to me?” he asked.

“Why are you being so nosy? That’s called obsession. You’re the one who didn’t want to have a serious relationship, so stop butting into my business,” she told him.

“Ah-Young… still…” he muttered.

I heard them arguing as they started walking away.

‘She’s pretty sly.’

I thought she was a slow-witted dummy, but she understood very well about how to screw people over. Obviously, Kim Ki-Chul sounded anxious while Yoo Ah-Young sounded relaxed and I guess he didn’t have the courage to ask her if she was cheating on him. There was a song about how a wife cheated on her husband, and it was the perfect song for him.

Basically, their positions had completely changed. Not only was he worried that we might express our affection for each other a bit strongly, but he was also thinking

hard about the kind of relationship we had. He probably didn't want to acknowledge it, but it was obvious that he had imagined situations he didn't want to.

The one thing… I couldn't predict was…

'Huh?'

There was another person here; I mean, a dragon thinking the same as Kim Ki-Chul.

'Huuuh?'

"*Kyah… kyaaah…*"

Smartie obviously sounded sad, and goosebumps started rising on my skin when I thought about how she could understand our conversation. Of course, I thought that maybe she couldn't understand the strange atmosphere, but she was smarter than most and was quick-witted as well, so I was sure she had found the situation quite strange. Not only were her small tears wetting one side of my shoulder, but she was hugging me tightly as if telling me not to go anywhere as she continued crying. With that, I immediately started talking.

"D-Daddy isn't cheating. Really…"

I felt like shit.

"You're the only one for me, and I'm not cheating on your mom," I added

No, I was a piece of shit.

'Shit… '

CHAPTER 223
COMPLETION CEREMONY (1)

It may not seem like much, but it was important to me, and of course, I only wanted to show nice things to Smartie since her nature was still unknown. Raising her would become a big problem if her nature turned into something like 'selfish' or 'calculative.'

'Ugh… '

It applied even more when thinking about how her gentle nature would help her have a normal social life. Anyway, the important part was that I had to do something about Smartie's education, as we were at the point where I could no longer let Dialugia take care of our precious Smartie's education. Seeing her sleeping beside me made me think if I was just too worried about her. Since Breath had enough power to destroy a castle, I had to focus on the start of her growth.

When I turned my attention to the front, I saw two women staring at Smartie.

"She's really cute."

"Yeah, she seemed kind of exhausted. She hasn't gotten much sleep nowadays, she's been really hyper lately," I commented.

It was Cha Hee-Ra and Dialugia. It was surprising how close they had become despite having just met three days ago. Cha Hee-Ra had a pretty harmonious relationship with Jung Ha-Yan, so I guess she could be considered an outgoing person, but Dialugia was different. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she had zero social skills. Their relationship had probably developed because Cha Hee-Ra somewhat understood the emotions of a mother.

The way Cha Hee-Ra patted Smartie made it look as if she was petting a pet, and I was sure she liked her.

I had no choice but to say something to Cha Hee-Ra because she seemed so relaxed while chatting with Dialugia.

“Aren’t you going to the completion ceremony, noona?”

“*Oh*, is it that time already? Well, there’s no reason for me to be there for the entire ceremony because all I need to do is give a congratulatory message, while the other executives will take care of the rest. What about you, darling?” she asked.

“I’m going to head out in a bit. I was going to leave today, but I still had some stuff I needed to take care of… They had been taken care of now, though,” I replied.

“Time flies… It's already time for the ceremony. *Oh*, have you decided on the rearguard?” she asked.

“…”

“So you weren’t able to recruit anyone,” she commented.

“No, I’m just going to find someone within Lindel. It’s difficult to find a competent mage, so I looked into the archers as well, but I haven’t found anyone suitable. Everyone is below my expectations,” I answered.

“Are you saying that so the other guilds and clans that are recruiting those people can hear you?” she questioned.

“That’s not what I meant…”

“I was just asking. No need to panic,” she assured.

“You’re pretty mean,” I said.

“Is it okay if I make one comment, though?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“If it’s advice, then I welcome it,” I replied.

“The Blue Guild’s standards are too high,” she started.

“You think so?” I asked.

“Actually, it’s more like you had placed a strict standard on other people,” she added.

“*Ugh*… that’s understandable.”

Honestly, I had never actually thought about it, but it made sense after hearing what Cha Hee-Ra said.

"The members of the Blue Guild have been kind of unique from the start, darling. *Oh*, excluding the two geniuses, Kim Hyun-Sung and Jung Ha-Yan. Also, it was Kim Ye-Ri, right? That kid is the same, too. Sun Hee-Young isn't that strong to stand out, but she's so familiar with her holy power that it seems like she was born with it…" Cha Hee-Ra described.

"That's true."

"I don't exactly consider Jo Hye-Jin a genius, but she does have skills because I consider effort a part of talent. I guarantee you that no matter how strong Kim Ye-Ri becomes, it'll be difficult for her to catch up to Jo Hye-Jin," she continued.

"*Hm…*"

"Honestly, the fact that five of these people have gathered is pretty amazing. People like them are usually managing their own guilds or clans. Anyway, besides these unique players, you have ordinary members in your guild, right?" she asked.

"We do," I replied.

"You're in it, too…" she added.

"Yeah…"

"The magic scholar, Hwang Jung-Yeon, is part of the guild as well… and that loud mouth fatty that's in your guild. Oh yeah, his name is Park Deok-Gu, right? He's the same. But from my point of view, they're the type of members the guild needs right now," she continued.

She was correct.

"You and that magic scholar can be considered to have some involvement in both combat and non-combatant type of jobs, but that's not the case for Park Deok-Gu, right? I feel bad for saying this about him, but I honestly thought he was going to get kicked out pretty quickly," Cha Hee-Ra said.

I agreed.

“Not only did he last a long time, but he’s been keeping his position within the guild. I’m sure it’s because the guild members had helped him a lot, but that pig will become a top player someday, and people will know his name,” she added.

“You’re right,” I agreed.

If it were a long time ago, I would have disagreed with her, but it was different now. Even though he would be famous as a tanker and not because of his personal strength, he now had the potential to keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung’s party.

“Ordinary people can get stronger as long as they have decent support and are cared for. That’s the reason why the Red Mercenary Guild’s standards are lower than what you’d expect. There are cases where the people you don’t have any expectations for suddenly become enlightened,” she explained.

“*Hm*…”

“Of course, talent is important because there are times where no matter how hard one tries, they won’t get any stronger. But when I look at people, there’s one more thing I look for,” she said.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Whether they have the will or not,” she answered.

“That’s nice,” I commented.

“That’s also the reason why I fulfilled your request the first time you came here. It may sound ridiculous, but there was something different in your eyes. Usually, those who cling desperately would achieve at least one thing,” she confessed.

It made sense. Even though my eyes could see almost everything, they were not always right.

Honestly, I had never imagined that Park Deok-Gu would grow this much and that Lee Ji-Hye would settle down perfectly in the Black Swan guild.

‘The same goes for me… ’

“You did it on your own, but anyway, that’s all I wanted to say. Let’s go out and take a

look around once last time. Once the ceremony is over, you're going to take the trainees back to your guild," she suggested.

"*Ah*… you still need to give your congratulatory speech." I pointed out.

"It's a bit bothersome, but I still need to do it. What about you, Dialugia?" she asked.

She probably wouldn't come with us.

"It'll be difficult for me to come with you, Cha Hee-Ra. Dialuria is still sleeping…" Dialugia replied.

"*Ah*, then we'll be back after it's over," she informed her.

"Okay…"

The Red Mercenary Guild went all out.

'The Blue Guild didn't have any kind of completion ceremony.'

It actually felt like an official event, and now that I thought about it, Cha Hee-Ra's outfit was different from her usual outfit. Usually, she preferred wearing clothes that showed a bit of skin. She was like that when we first met, and the party dress she wore at the gathering was a bit sensual as well. However, since she had to read her congratulatory message in front of the rookies, she probably thought she had to dress up for the occasion, and seeing her dressed up in flashy armor made me want to call her Red Knight or Red Mercenary.

I was also dressed up, but I wasn't as flashy as Cha Hee-Ra.

'She does look pretty good.'

As we walked toward the tourney hall while being escorted by the Red Mercenary Guild members, I saw the trainees all lined up. The major guild masters of Lindel were sitting in a tent on the stage and were looking at the trainees.

'Hyun-Sung!'

I saw our lovely regressor as well. He was discussing something with Park Yeon-Joo, the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild, but when he saw me, he smiled. I didn't

want to be silly and wave my hand, so I nodded instead.

Cha Hee-Ra walked up to the podium without looking at the trainees even once. The trainees seemed amazed by how neat Cha Hee-Ra's red hair was, but the majority of them seemed nervous.

'Is this their first time seeing her?'

She was the strongest in Lindel and the one who created the Red Mercenary Guild. The way her hair fluttered in the air while wearing her armor made her look like the Goddess of War. Usually, people like her didn't need to do anything special to stand out, and I wasn't sure if this was the correct comparison, but I felt like I was watching television.

Naturally, I walked on the stage with her. I looked at the trainees after taking my seat, but unfortunately, no one stood out. Lee Chang-Ryeol and Yoo Ah-Young were going to head to Lindel with me after the ceremony, and I noticed them looking at me.

'Has she taken care of Kim Ki-Chul?'

Seeing the smile on Yoo Ah-Young's face made me think that she got him good and that she might mess him up even more after the ceremony. Lee Chang-Ryeol was standing up while wearing the mask he had always been wearing, but he was looking at me with a friendly gaze.

That was when Cha Hee-Ra started reading her congratulatory message.

"I'm sorry for making you all suffer by holding a useless event like this. I'm sure you all want to return to Lindel and focus on your lives, but at events like this, there are bound to be useless customs. Honestly, there isn't much I want to say to you all. The guild's executives did write a congratulatory message, but…" Cha Hee-Ra paused.

'She probably won't read it.'

"It's not my type, and rather than trying to look good by reading something like this, you probably need realistic advice," she continued.

The executives of the Red Mercenary Guild looked as if they expected it.

"Entering this place means you'll have to hold a sword. Whether you have a

production-type job or you just don't want to fight, the day will come when you'll have to use a sword. Monsters may attack the city, and an unexpected war can break out. It's built so that players will live that kind of life," she added.

Her speech was interesting.

"That's why we have been giving useless basic training to non-combatants and those who are unwilling. This will probably help you understand better since you don't know about the world just yet. You were sent here as warriors and were trained to be warriors. It may sound ridiculous if you heard this while on Earth, but all of you are warriors. All of you can fight, and you must be prepared for that day," Cha Hee-Ra advised.

Her speech was mortifying but relatable.

"Of course, everyone will fight differently, but if I start talking about that, it'll only make the speech longer. There's one thing I want to say, though. Don't do anything stupid and get yourselves killed," she warned.

"…"

"…"

The place became quiet.

"I'll see you on the battlefield, rookies," she concluded her speech.

The Red Mercenary Guild's flag was raised up when she ended her speech, and the ceremony ended with the members saluting her.

"Do you want to say something, darling?" she asked.

When I shook my head, I saw her stepping down. She definitely looked like a pro.

'I might actually fall for her… '

Cha Hee-Ra was cool, not because she was a woman, but because she was a cool individual. I wasn't the only one who thought her straightforward personality was charming.

'I was staring at her the entire time.'

Thanks to her, I didn't have the chance to look at the trainees. I wanted to look, but the other guilds were already taking the people they had recruited away. A few of the trainees got on a carriage that would take them to Lindel, and that also included the Blue Guild's two member-to-be trainees. Yoo Ah-Young and Lee Chang-Ryeol were heading toward the place that had the Blue Guild's flag, and that was when a person caught my attention.

She was mixed in with the other trainees who hadn't received an offer and were waiting for the carriages to leave.

'Han Sora.'

It was like I was looking at Lee Ji-Hye.

I did think about bringing her with me, but the Blue Guild didn't need another alchemist. It wouldn't be a bad idea to use her since she was passionate about alchemy, but there was a conflict between her and me.

'Usually, those who cling desperately would achieve at least one thing.'

Cha Hee-Ra's words repeated in my head. I did take a look at her status window again, but nothing really changed.

'Wait… '

The most important part had changed, and it was so ridiculous I couldn't help but laugh.

'Would you look at that… '

[Job - Black Mage]

I couldn't help but call her.

“Hey, come here.”

Han Sora’s eyes started to tremble.

“I mean, please come here, Miss Han Sora,” I asked politely.

I spoke to her politely, but her eyes were still quivering.

CHAPTER 224
COMPLETION CEREMONY (2)

I noticed an unknown fear in Han Sora's eyes, and if I were her, I would have shown the same reaction. If I were her, I would do my best not to get involved with the Blue Guild anymore. Not only would I stay away from the guild, but I might even move to a different city. If she were smart, she was probably having the same thoughts as me. That was how big of a trauma Jung Ha-Yan had left on this girl. I wasn't sure if it was a good thing or bad thing that Jung Ha-Yan wasn't here, but it was likely she didn't want to get involved with me at all. However, her thoughts didn't matter to me, as the fact that she chose Black Mage as her job was a bit more important to me.

'Black Mage.'

I didn't even need to ask her why.

[Black Mage - Rare Rank - A ranged job that allows the user to use black magic. Black magic is a new type of magic that completely overturns conventional magic knowledge. Even though some religious groups are against black magic because its concept involves borrowing powers from demons, its destructive powers are overwhelmingly high compared to other jobs. Acquired basic black magic knowledge. Magic has been increased by four points.]

'Would you look at that… '

It was the only job she could choose since her mana circuits had been destroyed. Unlike mages who had to have an affinity with magic, Black Mage was one of the classes of which mana wasn't that big of an influence.

I remember contemplating between Black Mage and Alchemist. At the time, Park Deok-Gu recommended Black Mage, and Kim Hyun-Sung recommended Alchemist. I *did* think that the former was better, but the epic-ranked item, Ramus Tucker's

Introduction to Alchemy, was what made me choose to become an Alchemist. However, it was true that I would sometimes think.

'What if I chose to be a Black Mage instead?'

My position right now wasn't bad. I was receiving treatment that even I didn't think I deserved, and personally, I had achieved great things. Not only did I obtain a unique legendary-ranked job, but I also managed to make up for what I was lacking. But…

'Black Mage wouldn't have been so bad either.'

If I had chosen Black Mage, I would have had a hard time moving within the Holy Empire, but that field was unknown to me, so of course, I was curious about it.

While I was having different thoughts, Han Sora spoke as she looked at me, and naturally, she looked surprised.

"Were you… calling… for m-me?"

"Please step out of the carriage, Miss Han Sora," I told her.

"*Ah*…"

She seemed anxious, and when I saw that expression, I had a feeling she didn't pick Black Mage because she wanted to get back at me.

'I'm sure that's not the case.'

No matter how powerful she was, I couldn't imagine her hurting Jung Ha-Yan.

'Maybe that's a good thing.'

The two were on completely different levels, and Han Sora knew better than anyone that she wouldn't be able to catch up to Jung-Ha Yan.

As I nodded, I spoke to the coachman waiting to leave.

Han Sora looked at me anxiously as she limped her way out of the carriage while still being wrapped in bandages.

“You can leave first. The Blue Guild will take her to Lindel.”

“Alright, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” the coachman replied.

“I think it’ll be better if you ride our carriage, Miss Han Sora. Follow me,” I instructed her.

“…”

“We can discuss different things. *Oh*, I forgot that you have a difficult time walking. You can take your time,” I told her.

“…”

It was kind of awkward. After a moment of silence, Han Sora spoke cautiously when the carriage full of trainees left.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young…”

“Yes?” I asked.

“Did I do something wrong? If… I made a mistake, I-I’ll apologize for it. So please…” she said.

“*Ahh*… it’s nothing like that. To be honest, I’m already over that incident. Also, please call me Mr. Ki-Young,[1] or you can call me Sub Guild Master as well. Any one of them is fine,” I interrupted.

“What?” Han Sora asked.

“I’m not an instructor anymore,” I replied.

“No, that’s not…”

“*Ah*… you’re talking about that. It’s like I said. It might have been a big incident for you, but I don’t have any grudge against you or anything. You have already been punished for it, and you have apologized as well,” I explained.

“So why…”

“Who knows? Why did I call you, especially at the end of the ceremony?” I asked.

“…”

“You’ll be able to figure it out pretty easily,” I added.

“Are you going to… ki—”

“Join the Blue Guild,” I offered.

“What?”

“I’m asking you to join the Blue Guild. You’ll be treated pretty well. I’ll make sure your salary is decent and that you’re getting paid just as much as other people. Of course, it won’t be as much as Miss Yoo Ah-Young or Mr. Lee Chang-Ryeol, but it’ll be just as much as the other guilds,” I informed.

“*Huh?*”

“You can read the benefits and other features through the catalog, and as for the contract duration…” I paused.

“*Ah*…”

“The term will be for life. A contract like this is very rare, and it’s not allowed under imperial law, but as long as you keep quiet, no one will know,” I continued.

“Wait, I…”

“You have a lot of work to do. Since you have basic alchemy knowledge, I’ll make you the chief administrator of the alchemy lab and… *Oh!* You’ll be in charge of the rearguard of the Blue Guild’s second party, so please keep that in mind,” I informed her.

“My… mana… and my l-leg…” Han Sora stuttered.

“Your leg doesn't matter because what we ask from the rearguard isn’t agility. The problem is your mana… It may take some time with your broken mana circuits, but I’ll look into it and see if there’s a way to fix it. The side effects will still be there, but to you, it doesn’t really matter whether or not your mana circuits can still be used,” I

answered.

“I don’t understand what… you’re…”

“Miss Han Sora, let’s not lie. Don’t worry about how I found out or what kind of method I used, and just nod. It’ll be a lot safer if you stay beside the Holy Empire’s Honorary Bishop than to wander around by yourself,” I explained.

“…”

“If you don’t want the empire’s proud Inquisitors to suddenly come to visit you, sign the contract. The Blue Guild isn’t picky about its members. Your secret and disability won’t be a problem,” I added.

Han Sora remained quiet, and obviously, her face had turned pale. I wasn’t sure what she was thinking, but she knew the situation had gotten messed up. She didn’t have the option to decline since I had basically half-threatened her to sign the contract.

‘She is pretty smart.’

“About Ha-Yan…”

“*Gulp*.”

As soon as I said Jung Ha-Yan’s name, she gulped because Jung Ha-Yan was probably the reason why she didn’t want to join the Blue Guild.

“You don’t have to worry. As long as you don’t do anything stupid, she won’t hurt you first. *Oh!* I had one left, so please sign first,” I instructed.

“I’m sorry. I-I’m sorry. I’m sorry. *Hiccup*. Please… please…” Han Sora begged.

“*Geez…* I’m not trying to kill you,” I assured.

“I’m begging you. I don’t want to join, please…” she begged again.

“I’ll increase your pay,” I offered.

“That’s not it. Please, sir, I was being stupid. So…”

“I’m really not trying to bully you, so please sign first,” I repeated.

It was ridiculous how she gripped her pants. I was offering her a large sum of money she wouldn’t be able to touch even if she worked all her life, and yet she was reacting this way. I knew why, but it was worse than I thought. However, I knew what kind of decision she was going to make. It would be like entering a tiger’s den, but she never really had a choice, to begin with.

‘She’ll be really useful… ’

Hee-Ra noona was right. Han Sora wanted to live, and she was desperate as well, I had higher expectations for Han Sora than for Lee Chang-Ryeol and Yoo Ah-Young.

‘She’s a rearguard.’

Naturally, I felt proud as I saw Han Sora signing her name with her trembling hands.

Yoo Ah-Young and Lee Chang-Ryeol started approaching where the Blue Guild’s flag was at the right time. I thought Kim Hyun-Sung was going to guide them, but a guild staff was guiding them instead.

‘Team Leader Kim Mi-Young?’

It had been a while since I had seen her.

“Miss Kim Mi-Young, it’s been a while,” I greeted.

“It has been a while, Sub Guild Master. It really has been a while,” she greeted back.

“Where’s Mr. Hyun-Sung?” I asked.

“The Guild Master said he had some business to discuss with Miss Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild. He apologized and asked me to guide them,” she replied.

“*Hm*…”

I guess Park Yeon-Joo had really fallen for him hard, and Kim Hyun-Sung was probably in an awkward situation.

‘She’s not someone you can ignore, after all.’

The strange part was that I couldn't see Sun Hee-Young. Kim Mi-Young must have noticed me looking around because she started talking.

"Miss Hee-Young will also be riding in the Black Swan's carriage."

"*Ah!* I guess they really do have a business to take care of," I remarked.

"They do. They said they'll return to Lindel by tonight. They asked me to notify you that we're going to be holding a welcoming party and dinner," she informed.

"I see…" I nodded.

"This is…"

"I recruited her at the last minute. I'm sorry for giving you more work, but I think she'll be necessary for the second party," I explained.

"*Ah*…"

When Kim Mi-Young looked at Han Sora, she looked at one of her eyes and legs, but she stared at her anxious face the longest. However, Kim Mi-Young didn't seem to mind because she trusted and supported me.

"Okay. I'll start the joining procedure as soon as we arrive and report it to the guild union. And the contract…"

"She has just signed her contract so please check the details and increase the salary written on here by ten percent. Now that I think about it, I don't think that's enough. You captured the tutorial dungeon together with Mr. Chang-Ryeol, right?" I asked her.

"Yes, Sub Guild Master, but…"

"I've thought a lot about this, so just trust me. Your body may not be in the best condition, but you'll be able to fulfill your duty," I reassured.

"Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

I didn't know what kind of expression Lee Chang-Ryeol had since he was wearing his red mask, but he didn't seem disappointed. He seemed okay with it since he knew Han Sora, but Yoo Ah-Young seemed happier than him. I was worried they were

going to be focused on her, but the situation turned out better than I had expected.

“By the way, Miss Ah-Young… have you taken care of Mr. Kim Ki-Chul? I should have helped… I’m sorry, something came up,” I apologized.

“It’s fine. You didn’t need to help,” Yoo Ah-Young said.

“That’s a relief…” I responded.

“It was very relieving. Miss Kim Mi-Young helped, and there’s still something else I want to do to him… Could I tell you later?” she asked.

“Of course…” I answered.

‘I think she’s too into it.’

I didn’t know how Kim Mi-Young had helped her and what her plans were, but it was kind of scary to think that her revenge wasn’t over just yet.

‘Still, it’s not bad.’

Overall, I was a bit disappointed with this year’s group of trainees, but I felt like I had created a decent party. Yoo Ah-Young, Lee Chang-Ryeol, and Han Sora. If the experienced Ahn Ki-Mo joined their party, they would become a balanced party. Now that I thought about it, each of them had one thing lacking…

I was worried about leaving them to Ahn Ki-Mo, but he was a priest who could either be a vanguard or rearguard. He could also use his skills to grow even more.

‘I should help him with that… ’

However, there were still a lot of issues that had to be taken care of for them to adapt to the guild, and while I was thinking about the biggest problem, a carriage arrived. I was kind of surprised by the person sitting inside the carriage.

“Oppa!”

Jung Ha-Yan was waving with a bright smile. I was sure she had come out here to see me, but I wasn’t really happy to see her because sure enough, I started to hear a strange voice. It was Han Sora, and her body was shaking as she looked at Jung Ha-

Yan.

"*Ah… Ahhhhhh… Ahh!*"

Han Sora was seizing, and she staggered as well. However, what bothered me the most was that the lower half of her body was getting wet. Yellow liquid dripped from the end of her pants, and my heart broke when I saw that.

'She's still like this?'

I assumed she had improved, as she hadn't seen Jung Ha-Yan for a long time, but it seemed that I had misunderstood. I pitied her because Han Sora still hadn't realized what was happening to her as she continued to scream. I had to acknowledge the fact that the situation had worsened, and seeing Jung Ha-Yan waving with a bright look gave me goosebumps.

'What… what the hell did you do… '

"I-I'm sorry…"

'Did you turn her into Pavlov's dog or something?'

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1. The difference here between Mr. Lee Ki-Young (이기영 교관님) and Mr. Ki-Young (기영 씨) is that there is a difference in formality that doesn't quite translate well into English. Mr. Lee Ki-Young would be directly translated as Instructor/Teacher Lee Ki-Young, but in English, you address teachers as Mr. or Mrs/Ms. That is why it was decided to drop the surname "Lee" and go with Mr. Ki-Young since 기영 씨 implied a bit of closeness, but still retaining that formality. ☜

CHAPTER 225
PARTY (1)

Back then, I was kind of shocked when I saw the guilty-looking Jung Ha-Yan bringing Han Sora with her, and despite the fact that Sun Hee-Young had treated her, she basically still looked like a rag. I had no idea what happened between those two, but when thinking about Han Sora's condition at that time, I was sure she had experienced something beyond my imagination. My point was proven when she was still traumatized even after her treatment.

'It had to be a more traumatic experience than I thought… '

I had never imagined that she would pee herself just by looking at Jung Ha-Yan. Jung Ha-Yan didn't pay attention to her much since the misunderstanding had already been cleared, but I couldn't help but be worried about Han Sora the entire ride back to Lindel.

During our trip back to Lindel, we had to change carriages three times, and if the carriage wasn't big, I was certain we would have had to change at least seven times. Thanks to that, Han Sora had to use the same area as Dialugia and Smartie, who was asleep, but the former still seemed kind of uncomfortable. I wanted to do something, but I couldn't do anything because she would always be wary whenever Jung Ha-Yan's name was mentioned, and her body would start shaking just by looking at Jung Ha-Yan's shadow. As such, I had no way of making her feel better.

All I could do for now was watch until she got used to it, and at this point, I started to think if it was a mistake to recruit Han Sora.

Even if the parties were split into one and two, party two would still have to join us on future expeditions. When I thought about this, I thought I had to help Han Sora psychologically.

'She's still better than the first time.'

I had no idea if it was because she had peed it all out, but during the last part of our trip, she hadn't peed herself, which was a good start. The first thing I had to do was

show that I had several safety restraints, as I was the one holding the leash of this excited dog, and making the dog wear a muzzle would be effective as well. I was sure she would still be afraid of Jung Ha-Yan, but I could stop her from having a seizure at the very least.

As I was thinking about this, the carriage passed through Lindel's entrance, and that was when Yoo Ah-Young's mouth opened wide. The trembling Han Sora had to be curious as well because she looked out the window, and even though he was pretending he wasn't excited, Lee Chang-Ryeol still glanced out the window.

"Wow…"

They had the same reaction as us when we first arrived here, so it was natural for them to react that way. Unlike the training camp that didn't have any entertainment or facilities, the different parts of the city showed that Lindel was developing. There was entertainment, and the people looked lively here.

As expected, as soon as we entered the plaza, I started to hear voices.

"Looking for a party! We'll go out to hunt as soon as a priest joins. We'll give by-products by adjusting the proportions. We'll leave as soon as a priest joins! We respectfully decline thieves."

"I'm getting rid of rare-ranked items. I'm selling it for cheap, so come take a look."

"Extra! Extra!"

"Recruiting people for a dungeon expedition! It's an average-ranked dungeon!"

"Lindel's bestseller, *How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves* Volume Three! There are only 93 copies left. I'll only distribute it up to number 93. I would like to apologize to the people that have been waiting."

'They're even selling novels… '

What caught my attention the most was the group of people on the outskirts of the plaza because they were really noisy. I was curious as to what was going on because the group, mostly made of women, was trying to purchase that unknown novel.

"What?! Are you joking? I have been waiting since last night!"

“What kind of event is this? Who’s the organizer?”

“I don’t care about the money. If you still have some, give them to me!”

“You think we don’t know that you have already distributed them to the executives of the large guilds? Are the large guilds your only readers?”

When the Blue Guild announced a new potion, the people showed a similar reaction.

‘Maybe I can make money off of that… ’

Since people were living comfortably, I felt like the amount of gold they were using for those kinds of content had increased. To make things worse, I saw people urging those who had already bought the novel to sell it back to them, and it was so ridiculous that I couldn't help but say something to Kim Mi-Young.

“Miss Kim Mi-Young.”

“Yes?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“What’s that…”

“*Ah*. Well… it looks like a popular novel in Lindel,” she replied.

“I see. Does it sell well?” I questioned.

“It does. The novel was originally sold in shady places, but rumors about it started to spread more and more… I even heard that they have started distributing the novels to Celia and Dawan recently,” she answered.

“Celia and Dawan? Wow, that’s pretty amazing. The business of making content seems to be doing well these days… Has the Blue Guild prepared something?” I asked.

“No. We haven’t really thought about that market yet…” she answered.

“If you have time, please submit a report that includes market research. It’s fine if you take your time, but please send me the full details. I think it’ll be fun if we start distributing it… *Ah*, have you read that novel as well, Miss Kim Mi-Young?” I asked.

“What? Oh… yes…” she muttered.

She seemed reluctant to answer. Kim Mi-Young was a workaholic, so I was kind of relieved to hear that she had hobbies and that she could still enjoy her free time.

“That’s a relief. What is it about?” I asked.

“It’s kind of complicated for me to explain,” she replied.

“I see. Have you read it, Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“No, it’s the first time I’ve seen it. I didn’t know something like that existed,” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

I guess there was only a small group who enjoyed content like that. Anyway, a sight like that showed that the city was lively, making the trainees think that it wasn’t such a bad city. They seemed pretty happy, and they were probably having this kind of thought.

‘So people do live here.’

I was sure there were things in the city that would make them frown, but this place was definitely filled with people. There were a lot of people laughing, and the city was pretty active as well. I was certain the entire city looked livelier because of the rookies who had just joined, but I wanted to thank the citizens of Lindel for leaving a good impression on the rookies. Even while looking at the scenery, the carriage passed the plaza and headed toward the Blue Guild. Not long after, I heard Kim Mi-Young calling me.

“We’re here, Sub Guild Master.”

“Alright.”

The moment I stepped out of the carriage, I saw Park Deok-Gu and Hwang Jung-Yeon. It had been a while since I had seen the kid, and even Ahn Ki-Mo was sitting next to her. There was also another person I hadn’t seen for a really long time.

‘Jo Hye-Jin is here, too.’

I guess the situation at Castle Rock had finally been taken care of, and I was sure I

would have the chance to talk to her about that later. What kind of amazed me was the fact that another building had been added to the Guild House.

'I've read it in the report… '

It was definitely different seeing with my own eyes. The design itself was more medieval than modern, but it seemed like a classic, making it even more stylish. As if they liked the Guild House, the trainees blinked constantly and seeing that made me feel proud.

Before I could take my time looking around, I heard a voice.

"Hyung-nim!"

"Hey, Deok-Gu. It's been a while, Miss Jung-Yeon, Miss Hye-Jin. You too, Ye-Ri…" I greeted.

"Yeah…"

"It's been a while, Sub Guild Master…"

"How are you, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo?" I asked.

"My former guild master told me that if I wanted to leave, I had to do it quickly, so I packed my stuff and moved right away. It has already been a few days since I started spending time at the Blue Guild, *hahaha*…" Ahn Ki-Mo laughed.

"*Ah!* I see… Welcome to the Blue Guild, and let me introduce you to them. They're the rookies who have recently joined our guild. From the left, it's Miss Yoo Ah-Young, Mr. Lee Chang-Ryeol, and Miss Han Sora," I said.

When I glanced at the rookies and introduced them, I saw the rookies greeting the group first in response to my introduction.

"Hello, I'm Yoo Ah-Young. I look forward to working with you."

"I'm Lee Chang-Ryeol."

"I'm Han… Sora. Please take care of me."

I was happy seeing them introduce themselves in their own way. Yoo Ah-Young was pretty cheerful, Lee Chang-Ryeol was just Lee Chang-Ryeol, and Han Sora was still conscious of Jung Ha-Yan. Naturally, I spoke once again, as I thought there was a need to change the atmosphere.

"Miss Yoo Ah-Young's job is a part of the warrior class, Mr. Chang-Ryeol is part of the assassin class, and Miss Han Sora is part of the mage class. I'll explain the details later, but I'm planning on making them the key members of party two. I think we should assign their rooms first. *Oh*, Deok-Gu. You should guide them with Miss Jung-Yeon," I suggested.

"No problem!" Park Deok-Gu answered.

"Show them the basement first and work your way up, and Miss Jung-Yeon, please assign their rooms. Mr. Lee Chang-Ryeol wants the most remote room, so we can give him that, and for Miss Han Sora and Miss Yoo Ah-Young, please decide after thinking carefully," I ordered.

"*Hmm!*"

"We're getting together for dinner, so please finish everything before dinner. For preparations…" I paused.

It was likely that the guild staff had already done everything, but I was sure some of them wanted to help.

"I'll… do it…"

Kim Ye-Ri was looking at the new recruits with interest, and I think it was because she already considered herself their senior. Of course, I couldn't let a kid take care of it since she wasn't even an adult yet. But before I could even think about how she needed a guardian, I heard a voice.

"I'll go with her, Sub Guild Master."

"I'll leave it up to you, Miss Hye-Jin."

"Sure…"

"I'll go as well."

“Go ahead, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo.”

It felt kind of chaotic because so many people were moving about in one area, but it wasn’t so bad. Jung Ha-Yan was holding on to me tightly, and she didn’t seem to care about what was going on, but personally, it wasn’t a bad feeling.

Since Smartie had been asleep for so long, it seemed like Dialugia wasn’t planning on returning to the nest today.

When I thought about how it had been a while since our previous gathering, it was already night time. The new recruits were still exploring the Guild House, and since Kim Ye-Ri, Jo Hye-Jin, Ahn Ki-Mo, and even Jung Ha-Yan were already preparing for the party, I was sure the preparation would be over soon. After spreading the news that I had returned to Lindel, I was waiting for our lovely regressor to show up, and not long after, I saw him enter through the door.

‘I missed you, you bastard.’

It had been a while since I saw him this close.

CHAPTER 226
PARTY (2)

Kim Hyun-Sung probably felt the same way, and even though he couldn't express it openly, he looked happy. It was nice seeing each other like this since we had been busy, and this may not be the best example, but it was like a busy married couple was finally able to relax after a very long time. We were living under the same roof, but since we were both busy, the only time we could see each other was when we arrived home and left work for the day. I was busy myself, but Kim Hyun-Sung kept himself busy by running around. I didn't know exactly what he was up to, but I was certain he was preparing for the future because he worked diligently without doing anything stupid. I was sure he would tell me the details when the time came, but I was still curious as to what he had been up to.

I spoke up first.

"You're here."

Kim Hyun-Sung must have realized we were waiting for him because he spoke quietly.

"I'm sorry for being late. Something came up…" Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

"It's fine, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I said.

"I was thinking about bringing them with me…" he informed me.

"You did say you had business with the Black Swan Guild," I mentioned.

"I don't think it's something I should talk about here, but…" he started.

"Yes?"

"Actually, I think it's best if I talk about it after the party. Let's just enjoy the party for now since our task today is to welcome the new recruits," he suggested.

"All right…"

'He seems kind of serious… '

Spending a lot of time together with someone would make you tend to catch onto things faster involving them. Kim Hyun-Sung didn't look good. I was sure there was something on his mind because he seemed like he was frustrated. Of course, that only lasted for a moment because he immediately looked happy after mentioning the new recruits. However, he was still awkward.

'There's something on his mind… '

I couldn't guess what it was because nothing had been revealed just yet, but I started to recall how Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild had kept on talking to Kim Hyun-Sung. At the time, I thought she was just showing interest in him, but now that I thought about it, it had to be something serious.

'Is he in trouble or something?'

I couldn't imagine the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild being in danger. Park Yeon-Joo was healthy, and nothing seemed off after talking to Lee Ji-Hye.

I didn't need to worry about it right now since nothing would come out of it even if I thought about it. Still, I couldn't help but be bothered by it.

After Kim Hyun-Sung tapped my shoulder, he started walking, and obviously, the guild members looked at him. When he sat down after joining the party, I thought it would be appropriate for him to say something, so I encouraged him a bit.

"Please say a word, Guild Master."

"Yes. Since we have gathered, you should say something, bro!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"*Ah*…"

Kim Hyun-Sung looked surprised, but he didn't seem uncomfortable. There was a strong feeling that he stood up only because Park Deok-Gu had urged him to rather than because of what I had said. When he stood up, everyone focused on him.

“You’re right. First of all, I’m sorry for being late. I tried to get here as soon as possible, but the conversation lasted longer than I expected,” Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

“You were late because of work, so no need to apologize. You’re busy running around to take care of us,” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“*Haha*. I appreciate you saying that. I did plan today’s meeting, but I didn’t do the preparations, so I feel kind of uncomfortable saying a congratulatory message. Miss Yoo Ah-Young, Mr. Lee Chang-Ryeol, Miss Han Sora, and Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo… Since I wasn’t at the training camp, I wasn’t able to talk to all of you, but I know all of you are good people…” he started.

‘How… ’

To be honest, I picked them based on their stats, not their nature.

“I’m sure you have skills as well, and I personally checked Mr. Chang-Ryeol’s skills. Anyway, it’s nice to meet you all. It may sound cliche, but the Blue Guild aims to have a family-like guild, and I’m sure I’m not the only one who supports that,” he continued.

“You’re right…” Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

“The same goes for Miss Lee Sang-Hee, who established the Blue Guild in the beginning, and Miss Hwang Jung-Yeon. Even Mr. Ki-Young, Miss Ha-Yan, and Mr. Deok-Gu, who first joined, and Ye-Ri, Miss Hee-Young, and Miss Hye-Jin, who joined later, all agree with me. It’s probably the same for Dialugia as well,” he added.

Kim Hyun-Sung had the tendency to be *very* friendly at times, but I welcomed this kind of friendliness.

“I want to thank the guild members who helped create this kind of guild, and I would also like to thank the new members. You won’t regret choosing the Blue Guild. Lastly—” Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

“…”

“Welcome to the Blue Guild,” he ended.

'Nice! They just might fall for you, you punk.'

When I saw a small smile on his face, I had no choice but to acknowledge the fact that he was good-looking, and after seeing Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Ye-Ri blushing, I knew I wasn't the only one who thought of that. If he hadn't entered this world, he might have lived on Earth as a celebrity or model.

"Let's drink…" he suggested.

When he said that, Park Deok-Gu's voice was the loudest.

"Let's drink!"

The party started, and the fancy food in front of us caught Yoo Ah-Young's attention since she surely wasn't able to eat this kind of food as a trainee. Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young were eating quietly in front of me, and Kim Hyun-Sung was talking to Lee Sang-Hee. Even though we were having dinner together, there were more than ten people, so they all started talking amongst themselves. Naturally, Park Deok-Gu stood out the most during events like this, and it was to the point that I could hear his loud voice all the way from here.

"By the way, bro, why do you keep wearing a mask, Mr. Chang-Ryeol?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"…"

"Mr. Chang-Ryeol has that thing in his mouth… Poison," Kim Ye-Ri informed him.

"*Huh?*"

"I… fought him… last time. It was an entrance test… It was kind of dirty, but it wasn't bad. He has talent," Kim Ye-Ri added.

Before I could think about Kim Ye-Ri's manner of talking to Lee Chang-Ryeol, she moved from her spot and started talking to other people.

"Miss Han Sora, is your leg really that badly injured? Hey, don't worry. Our hyung-nim and Hee-Young noonim once made a cripple walk! I'm sure once you start treatment, you'll start walking normally within three days. Isn't that right? Hee-Young noonim?" he asked.

“I’ll have to try, but… I’m not sure. I’ve treated her once already, but there are still aftereffects. If she continues to exercise, I’m sure her condition will become better than today,” Sun Hee-Young replied.

“Of course, she’ll get better! If she drinks that miracle potion hyung-nim had made, I’m sure her eyes will regenerate as well. Don’t worry about your eye either. If that doesn’t work, he’ll insert a prosthetic eye. I’m sure of it!” he shouted.

“Th-Thank you…” Han Sora stuttered.

Unfortunately, I didn’t have the ability to make a cripple walk. Letting a cripple walk would be a useful skill, but letting Han Sora’s body perfectly recover was beyond my powers.

“I heard what happened… That noonim got mad when you went into her magic lab. But don’t worry! Our Ha-Yan noonim is the symbol of forgiveness! No one is as angelic as her!” he continued.

“*Hiccup*…”

“Don’t you agree, noonim?” he asked.

“Yes, b-but I made a mistake, too. D-Don’t do that again…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“*Ah… ahh…*”

“Don’t worry! Your urinary incontinence can be treated as well!” Park Deok-Gu added.

The way he was jumping around from place to place reminded me of Hong Gil-Dong.[1]

“Now, about this noonim, you may not have seen it since you’re new, but she’s actually a dragon,” he continued.

Well, it was obvious because of her horns.

“I’ve seen her true form once during the Castle Rock defense war, and an evil mage was controlling our dragon noonim from a dungeon! And then… Our hyung-nim was the one who gave her a helping hand! What did he say back then—” he paused.

"…"

"Stop the attack! Stop the attack! Stop attacking! That was what he shouted as he stood in front of the dragon noonim. If hyung-nim were a woman, I would have fallen for him! Not only that, but noonim's daughter! He was protecting her by holding her with one hand!" he exclaimed.

I was embarrassed.

"Honestly, it was a good thing we didn't fight back then. If she attacked us with her claw, we would have died right there and then. If she had swallowed us, we would have died without having the chance to resist. Anyway, that's the reason why our dragon noonim chose our hyung-nim. Oh yeah, I also heard the dragon noonim can release energy waves," Park Deok-Gu added.

"It's called Breath," Dialugia corrected him.

"Breath, energy wave, same thing! Another interesting thing is that hyung-nim turned the same Breath into a potion!" he yelled.

'This bastard… '

He was speaking loudly as if to relieve all the stress he had received recently, and it wasn't really that bad. Thanks to him, the atmosphere lightened up a bit, and people were laughing as well. However, when I heard him spreading unorganized information, I couldn't help but feel uncomfortable and embarrassed to the point that I wanted to hide somewhere. Especially, when he started talking about Dialugia and me. Aside from me, the majority were focused and were enjoying the stories Park Deok-Gu was telling them. If he weren't here, I was sure the atmosphere wouldn't have been this lively, but most of all, I was happy that I didn't have to say anything.

'In a way, it's emotional labor.'

Obviously, Park Deok-Gu didn't think of it that way, and it didn't take him long to start talking about unnecessary things.

"You have no idea how hard I tried to stop him from becoming an alchemist. I did trust him back then, but I didn't want him to become an alchemist when he had an offer for a cool job like Black Mage… Right now, he had proven that he made the right

choice, but back then, even I looked down on production-type jobs," he started.

"I see…"

"Basically, production-type jobs have endless possibilities! It all depends on your hard work. I learned that from hyung-nim," he informed.

"Are you talking about production-type jobs, Deok-Gu oppa?" Yoo Ah-Young asked.

"Are you interested in production-type jobs too, Miss Ah-Young?" he asked.

"*Oh*… yes. At first, I didn't think about getting a combat-type job and was thinking about taking a different path. Mr. Lee Ki-Young said that he saw my potential, so I decided to seriously devote myself to this path," she replied.

"*Ahhh*, I see!" he commented.

"Also—" she paused.

"*Huh?*"

"To be honest, I unlocked a second job, although I haven't picked one yet… you see—" she paused again.

"Yeah?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Blacksmith is one of the choices," she continued.

"…"

"…"

"…"

The room suddenly became quiet, and I quickly looked at Kim Hyun-Sung's expression. He seemed a bit shocked looking at Park Deok-Gu, and I was sure he was recalling his past. Sure enough, I heard Park Deok-Gu mumbling.

"I think… a Blacksmith is good…"

‘You crazy pig… ’

His voice sounded deep in this quiet atmosphere. Of course, it was surprising, and Kim Hyun-Sung must have felt that something was off because he quickly started talking.

“Miss Ah-Young, what about your other job…”

“There were two choices. One was Blacksmith, and the other was Defense Warrior,” she replied.

“Not bad. It’s surprising that there are only two choices, but I’m sure it’s a side-effect of growing without going out for a hunt. With Defense Warrior, you’ll be able to fulfill your position just fine,” Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

“Defense Warrior… It does sound nice, but the basic shield knowledge that comes with the job effect is something I can teach her,” Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

'Don’t start this again… you pig.'

I noticed Park Deok-Gu looking around, and then he started his argument.

“Think about it. Hyung-nim picked Alchemist, but his firepower right now is better than other mages.”

It was all because I was special.

“If I were to give you my opinion… *Hm*, people who walk on the special path that no one else walks on will receive attention! Isn’t it pretty powerful being able to create a weapon that can kill monsters while holding up a shield?” he asked.

“That… makes sense, but the more she grows, the wider her growth gap will be. Since Miss Ah-Young has talent, I’m sure she’ll be able to unlock rare-ranked or even legendary-ranked jobs,” Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

“Hey, a legendary-ranked blacksmith could use their hammer to kill a monster with one attack,” Park Deok-Gu added.

“Wait… that’s…”

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't know what to say to Park Deok-Gu's ridiculous comment.

"It's up to Miss Ah-Young to make the choice, but if you think about hyung-nim's case, Blacksmith is the answer! Change is coming! Yoo Ah-Young, the genius Blacksmith who can make anything! Yeah… just thinking about it makes my heart beat fast," he said.

"I'm not saying that a production-type job is bad, and as you said about Mr. Ki-Young's case, the potential is there. Miss Ah-Young's talent ensures that she'll bring in good results by taking the standard path. So, when you think about it as a whole, it would be ideal for her to choose Defense Warrior," Kim Hyun-Sung stated.

His argument was actually reasonable. We definitely needed a blacksmith, but using Yoo Ah-Young as a blacksmith was wasting her talent.

"When you think about Miss Ah-Young's talent, she can grow stronger even if she doesn't take the standard path! Lindel needs something new! I definitely recommend Blacksmith!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

"She should pick Defense Warrior. If she chooses that job, then I'll give her this shield as a gift," Kim Hyun-Sung offered.

It was similar to the time when he tempted me to choose Alchemist. If there was one thing Kim Hyun-Sung had been ignoring, it was the fact that Park Deok-Gu was no longer a novice.

"If she chooses to be a Blacksmith, not only will I pass her the shield skills that I have, but I'll give her this hammer as a gift!" Park Deok-Gu offered.

It was a heavy hammer he had obtained from a dungeon exploration.

It was only for a moment, but Kim Hyun-Sung looked shocked.

"Blacksmith! People who are warm-hearted are supposed to use a hammer!" he added.

"Defense Warrior. Her talent will go to waste," Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

"She can use that talent elsewhere! Blacksmith!" Park Deok-Gu said.

“Defense Warrior!”

“Blacksmith!”

“Defense!”

“Blaaaaacksmiiiith!”

‘C-Crazy pig… ’

What was even more surprising was the fact that I was actually convinced by what Park Deok-Gu had said. I guess Yoo Ah-Young didn’t expect them to get so heated up by the topic she had brought up because she seemed shocked at what was going on.

“Defense Warrior!”

“Blacksmith! Blacksmith no matter what!”

“Defense Warrior is better. I’m sure of it.”

“Defense!”

“Blacksmith!”

“Defense Warrior!”

“Blaaacksmith! Here comes the hammer!”

What was that?

I noticed Yoo Ah-Young looking at me as if asking what she should do.

“Here comes the hammer!”

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1. Hong Gildong, an illegitimate son of a nobleman and his lowborn concubine, is the main character of the story. Gifted with supreme intelligence and supernatural abilities, he steals from rich and corrupt aristocrats, which has drawn him comparisons to famous bandits like the English folk hero Robin Hood and Australia’s

Ned Kelly. ☜

CHAPTER 227
PARTY (3)

'I'm getting convinced.'

When Park Deok-Gu first started talking, I thought every word he said was a bunch of bullshit, but as time passed, he started to persuade me.

'It makes sense… '

Besides the tone of his voice, Park Deok-Gu's argument made sense. There wasn't a reason for Yoo Ah-Young to choose Defense Warrior. If she chose that job, the only benefit would be that she could unlock high-ranked close-ranged jobs similar to the warrior. Of course, what I mentioned earlier was the most important part of her growth, but when considering her optimistic nature, it would undeniably take her a long time to achieve that. Now that I thought about it, Yoo Ah-Young didn't seem all that passionate at the training camp.

'It wasn't for her.'

She had talent, but my personal opinion was that she wasn't exactly excited about it, and I was sure it wasn't a coincidence that Blacksmith popped up in her selection window.

'Blacksmith never appeared for Park Deok-Gu.'

As she had mentioned, that category appeared because she was interested in production-type jobs, but no matter how hard I thought about it, what we needed right now was a vanguard. But since Park Deok-Gu possessed advanced shield knowledge, it could still be possible for Yoo Ah-Young to be a vanguard if Park Deok-Gu took care of her. When thinking about how an Alchemist like me had firepower as strong as a mage, as long as the method and timing had lined up, I was sure the blacksmith job could be used as a vanguard as well.

'Her potential isn't bad either.'

In addition, her stamina stat showed that she could be useful as a blacksmith, but the one thing I was worried about was that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't agreeing with Park Deok-Gu's argument. However, it wasn't because Yoo Ah-Young became really successful as a warrior in the future. Rather, it seemed like Kim Hyun-Sung didn't know that much about her. From Kim Hyun-Sung's point of view, I was sure he just didn't want a talented player we worked hard on recruiting to have a production-type job, but if we took the time, we could always recruit people on a similar level to Yoo Ah-Young's.

How?

I had Mind's Eye, and it was technically the same for Kim Hyun-Sung, as he was able to recruit people who would become talented in the future. When considering the fact that we had the superior treasure, Dialugia, she could even obtain a job like Dragon Blacksmith.

"Hyung-nim, what do you think? Don't you think Blacksmith is the way to go?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I'm not sure…"

"Think about it! Blacksmith is the perfect job! She definitely looks like a blacksmith!" he exclaimed.

She was starting to look like one.

"Imagine her hammering on an anvil with a hammer. She'll be working with a high-temperature furnace, and her fire resistance will be even higher than an ordinary vanguard. She'll be able to endure a sea of fire," he added.

'Bullshit… '

I couldn't really pinpoint why I was being convinced, but when I glanced at Yoo Ah-Young, she was also looking at me with a flustered look. I think she would look better in a blacksmith outfit than in armor. To reason with myself, the ideas I had earlier started to grow bigger and bigger.

"Blacksmith!"

"Defense Warrior!"

“Blacksmith!”

“Warrior!”

During all of this, Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Deok-Gu continued to shout the job they wanted Yoo Ah-Young to choose, and it felt like it was about time for me to step in. In the end, I had no choice but to betray our lovely regressor.

“I think… Blacksmith won’t be so bad.”

“Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung muttered.

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung’s surprised expression first.

‘I’m sorry, man. But my heart keeps telling me that she should choose blacksmith.’

Kim Hyun-Sung’s eyes resembled a puppy in the rain, but even that look couldn’t overcome Park Deok-Gu’s argument.

“I understand what you’re thinking, Mr. Hyun-Sung, but finding a talented blacksmith will be a lot harder than finding a talented warrior. If we search the entire empire, I’m sure we’ll find a decent blacksmith, but—” I paused

“I see,” he commented.

“Personally, I really don’t want the Blue Guild’s special resources to be revealed outside the guild, and as Deok-Gu mentioned, the knowledge she’ll obtain through unlocking her job is something Deok-Gu can teach her,” I continued.

“But… advanced magic knowledge isn’t something you can just learn,” Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

“I may not have that knowledge, but I believe my firepower is just as strong as other mages,” I replied.

“That’s because you’re a special case…”

“Miss Yoo Ah-Young could also be a special case. Of course, I was just giving a simple example earlier. In the end, it’s up to her to decide on what she wants to do,” I reminded him.

That was the most important…

'Which one will she choose?'

No matter how hard we pushed her into it, her choice would decide her fate. To be honest, the guild could force her to choose a specific job, and it applied more to Yoo Ah-Young since she had signed the contract as a combatant. If she chose to be a blacksmith without telling the guild, it could put us in an awkward situation. However, the Blue Guild respected individual freedom. It was because we knew it wouldn't be as efficient if we forcefully told people to change their jobs. Park Deok-Gu's argument was surprisingly convincing to the point it was strange, but the argument between him and Kim Hyun-Sung was just a recommendation. Yoo Ah-Young's opinion was the most important.

The room became quiet again.

"Well…" Yoo Ah-Young started.

"…"

"…"

"To be honest… Blacksmith is…" she muttered.

"…"

"Yeah! I knew it! You definitely look like a blacksmith!" Park Deok-Gu commented.

'What?'

"Can I ask why?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"Of course. I can't exactly say why, but it's like the job is calling to me… I'm not sure if this is a proper way to describe it, but it's like my spirit is telling me to choose this job," she replied.

How convincing…

"*Ah*…"

Yoo Ah-Young continued talking without discovering Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction.

"Of course, I'll train hard so that I won't hold back party two. Like what Mr. Lee Ki-Young had said before, I think it's possible if I managed to find my own way, although selecting a production-type job is still a bit scary…"

"I see…" Kim Hyun-Sung nodded.

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed a bit disappointed as he returned to reality.

'I'm sorry… '

However, it seemed like he felt better right away. He probably thought it was better to support Yoo Ah-Young if that was what she wanted to do. He may have considered the resources that Dialugia had or was thinking about the blacksmithing technique that was going to appear in the future and believed that this was the right time for her to choose blacksmith. However, it was also possible that she had convinced him when she said her spirit was telling her to choose Blacksmith.

"It's unfortunate, but there's nothing I can do about it. The guild will just have to support you as much as we can…" Kim Hyun-Sung told her.

"You can change some of the details on the contract because you originally signed it on the premise that you would have a combat-type job. I feel quite bad that you're changing your job," he said.

'I can understand… '

I felt like I had to say this.

"You don't have to worry about that, Miss Ah-Young. Instead, I think we'll have to adjust the contract duration… If you choose to be a blacksmith, the resources you will have access to will be different from the resources that'll be around you…" I informed her.

"I understand. I already had that in mind, sir," she said.

"I'm glad," I commented.

"*Hm! Hm!*"

Park Deok-Gu seemed like he was feeling better as he kept nodding with satisfaction. I thought maybe it was part of his plan to cut out the new vanguard since it could threaten his position, but Park Deok-Gu wasn't like me, so I was certain he didn't have those thoughts. However, something *did* seem off. From his point of view, it was possible that he just got lucky, but when looking at the results alone, it was something worth thinking about.

'Park Deok-Gu was the one who brought up the production-type job in the first place… '

Naturally, he couldn't see that blacksmith was on Yoo Ah-Young's job selection list because even I couldn't see that with Mind's Eye.

'That can't really be his plan, right?'

"I can finally use a shield made by the guild's blacksmith!" Park Deok-Gu exclaimed.

'I'm sure it's not because he wants it… '

It also wasn't because he wanted a weapon made out of Dialugia's horns or scales. Park Deok-Gu was the only normal member of the Blue Guild, but the result of his argument ended up being really beneficial for him.

"I'll support you with everything I got! Leave the training to me!" he added.

Park Deok-Gu was being bold by making the new recruit change their minds about their jobs and then having them make armor for him.

'This bastard may not be an idiot.'

I couldn't help but have that thought.

In the end, Yoo Ah-Young was enveloped in a faint light, and once again, Park Deok-Gu was able to keep his position. The loud noises and different conversations resumed, but the topics were mostly about Yoo Ah-Young, Han Sora, and Lee Chang-Ryeol.

"Did you obtain new knowledge?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I did. I want to test it out right now," Yoo Ah-Young replied.

“I’ll find out if we can help you in different ways,” I offered.

“Thank you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” she said.

Among the new recruits, Yoo Ah-Young had gotten the most attention. The dinner was originally planned so that we could just relax, but I guess we really were players upon seeing that we were discussing something like this during dinner. Kim Ye-Ri and Lee Chang-Ryeol were having a serious conversation, and Sun Hee-Young and Han Sora were discussing something as well. Obviously, they weren’t ordinary conversations.

‘So she managed to adapt here… ’

I realized once again that humans were adaptable animals.

Since we had just returned to Lindel today, I wanted to end this party as soon as possible, but it looked like it wasn’t going to end anytime soon.

In the end, I saw a few people going back to their rooms while drunk. The underage Kim Ye-Ri followed the guild master’s strict order to sleep and wake up early, so she had gone to her room with Jo Hye-Jin a long time ago. Sun Hee-Young, Hwang Jung-Yeon, the new recruits, and Ahn Ki-Mo returned to their rooms to rest, but Jung Ha-Yan remained by my side despite dozing off. It was the same for Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Deok-Gu. The people who remained were the four people who had met in the tutorial dungeon.

“As expected, the four of us are the last ones to remain!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

“You’re right. We all came from the tutorial…” I agreed.

“Yeah… It feels really different thinking that it has already been over a year. It’s really interesting how we have gotten to the point where we’re starting to train our successors. I knew I was always going to be with you hyung-nim, but I’m happy that I managed to spend a long time with you, bro,” he added.

“I understand what you mean. It’s a bit embarrassing, but thank you for trusting and following me,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

He had to be kind of embarrassed by what Park Deok-Gu had said, as his face turned slightly serious. Obviously, it was only natural for me to say something that was just

as embarrassing.

“It was nothing. We’re comrades after all,” I chimed in.

“…”

“…”

“Hyung-nim…” Park Deok-Gu called out.

I was the one who said it, but I was still embarrassed. However, for some reason, Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung looked at me as if they were feeling bad for me, so I had no choice but to change the subject.

“And it’s because Mr. Hyun-Sung’s decisions are reasonable.”

“I agree,” Park Deok-Gu commented.

That was when he started talking seriously.

“To be honest…”

“Yes?” I asked.

“It may not be so reasonable this time,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

The atmosphere kind of changed, and I realized right away what he was trying to say.

“Are you talking about the conversation you had with the Black Swan Guild?” I asked.

“Yes,” he answered.

“I see.”

“Is it dangerous?” I asked.

“Yes.”

‘Sh… shit… ’

The thing I was kind of worried about had finally happened.

CHAPTER 228
RIFT MUSEUM (1)

“Is it dangerous?” I asked.

“Yes…” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“I see…”

I knew being in the arms of the regressor wasn’t always comforting. If I had to compare this continent and the current situation to a game, Kim Hyun-Sung was a named NPC who gave main quests. It had already been confirmed that he was at the center of many things, and he was aware that he could be in danger during that process. Thinking about it now, he had always been in danger. He had been at risk when he first participated in the attack team with Jung Jin-Ho in the tutorial dungeon, and he had also been in danger during the Castle Rock defense war. Obviously, I didn’t really feel pressured during those events because I trusted our lovely regressor, but the biggest reason was that I always thought he would appear out of nowhere whenever I was in trouble and take care of the issue for me.

It was undeniable that the overall difficulty we had experienced in the tutorial dungeon had increased after he joined the party. It was dangerous, but I wasn’t nervous. Now that I thought about it, my decisions so far had been reasonable because they were made after considering these factors.

‘It might be kind of dangerous, but it’s possible.’

This had been the kind of thought I had whenever I carried out a plan.

Kim Hyun-Sung had never warned me about the risks his decisions would bring. If something did happen, he was confident enough to deal with it on his own, and he was also confident enough that none of his party members would die.

‘For him to bring this up, it has to be really dangerous even for him… ’

Honestly, I couldn’t help but feel anxious.

“Can you first explain what’s going on?” I asked.

“The Black Swan Guild has requested assistance,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

“We can’t reject their request,” I responded.

“That’s right,” he agreed.

Park Deok-Gu chimed in. “Why can’t we reject their request?”

“We owe them a lot,” I replied.

“*Ah*…”

“We owe the Black Swan in many different ways. We still haven’t paid them back, and when I was in trouble back at the castle, they helped me back then as well. They have also been helping us discreetly, and I’m sure you’ll be surprised when you hear it, Deok-Gu. They have been influencing us even in the most trivial matter,” I continued.

They even helped us with Park Deok-Gu’s case.

“Even though we’re allies, the Blue Guild, Black Swan Guild, and the Red Mercenary Guild are groups that are maintaining their own powers, so of course, they’ll work for their own benefits. The only reason why this alliance is still alive is that the groups need each other, not because of some strange friendship or even the goal to protect Lindel,” I added.

“But, aren’t you really… aren’t you really close to that red-headed noonim?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“That relationship is between Hee-Ra noona and me, not the Blue Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild. I’m sure it’s advantageous that we are close, but that’s all it is. Just like how I prioritize the Blue Guild first, she’s probably the same. That’s why even Mr. Hyun-Sung maintains a close relationship with the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild. It’s common sense to separate your personal life from your public life,” I said.

“*Ahh*…” Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

“The answer is obvious when you think about how out of the three guilds, the Blue

Guild has been receiving support from various fields in different ways. It means we are being taken care of. We may be considered a mid-sized guild considering the number of resources and manpower we have, but we're not that big…" I explained.

"I think I get it…" he muttered.

"Basically, the Blue Guild is receiving the most benefits out of the three guilds, and those benefits aren't free lunches. Simply put, it's time for us to pay them back for all the benefits we have received so far," I told him.

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded lightly.

"Mr. Ki-Young is right. This is also the Black Swan Guild's first time asking for the Blue Guild's help in an official way. If we reject it just because it's dangerous, both the Black Swan and Red Mercenary Guild will lose faith in us. This also applies to the other guilds and clans," Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

"*Ah*… I see… So basically, it's about trust," Park Deok-Gu said.

"Yes, that's the simple explanation," he agreed.

Based on our situation, we had no choice but to accept. If Kim Hyun-Sung was right and the task was truly dangerous, then in addition to paying off our debt, we could even make the Black Swan Guild owe us. This meant I could ask for their Guild Master's help again for the same issue I had encountered with Park Deok-Gu.

'Not bad.'

We had no idea how or when the Blue Guild would be in danger. It was a bit ironic to think that we had to be in danger to overcome them, but this continent rewarded people for taking risks. Since we had no choice, it was time for me to throw the dice.

"What kind of work is it?" I asked.

"It's a dungeon…" Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

'I knew it.'

Unless there was a war and someone was being held captive in another country, this was the only thing the Black Swan Guild could ask our help for.

“Basically, the main executives and the guild members have gotten themselves isolated from each other inside the dungeon. The request I received from Miss Park Yeon-Joo is to rescue those inside the dungeon as well as to capture the dungeon. Of course, Miss Park Yeon-Joo and the main forces of the Black Swan Guild will be joining us. About thirty people will participate…” he explained.

“*Hm*, are those people in the dungeon still alive?” I questioned.

“A survivor escaped the dungeon, and according to their testimony, I’m sure they got themselves isolated from each other in the dungeon. The name of the dungeon is Rift Museum. This dungeon in particular… it has no rank.” Kim Hyun-Sung pointed out.

“So a survivor managed to escape. Wait… you’re saying the dungeon doesn’t have a rank?” I asked.

“Yes. To be exact, I heard it’s a type of dungeon with an ever-changing rank. Not only can it be an average-ranked dungeon, but it can also become a legendary-ranked dungeon. Personally… I think it’s best to consider the possibility that it can change into a dungeon above legendary in rank,” he suggested.

“What?” I questioned.

“The chances of that happening is extremely low, but—” he paused.

If there were a chance the dungeon could change ranks into above legendary, not only was it unreasonable to enter that dungeon, but it would be suicide. Considering the fact that only a few legendary-ranked dungeons had been captured so far, entering a dungeon that could possibly be above legendary was absurd. If there really were survivors in there, I was sure the Black Swan Guild would make preparations related to capturing the dungeon, but despite that, there were too many dangerous factors that had to be considered.

‘If it’s above legendary… is it mythic?’

It could be an average-ranked or an epic-ranked dungeon. I couldn’t help but be curious about how this was possible.

“How is that possible?” I asked.

“The Rift Museum is a type of museum where named monsters randomly spawn,”

Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"*Ah*…"

"Rare, epic, legendary, and mythic-ranked named monsters are sealed inside a rift, and they are sent out randomly," he added.

"Where did you get that…"

"Maybe it would be better if I showed you the report instead of explaining it to you. The report was made based on the information received from the Rift Museum dungeon guide," he suggested.

"Thank you," I said.

'A dungeon guide… '

I had heard about these types of dungeons; no, I had experience being in one. The dungeon type may be different, but the woman's voice I had heard in the tutorial dungeon could be considered the dungeon guide. The dungeon guide was basically an Irregular who informed players on how the dungeon worked and the goal. It was a term that encompassed everything like the vestiges of the mages' thoughts previously living in a dungeon like the Mage's Tower, which had been captured by the Devil's Guild, the tutorial dungeon's System, or spirits wandering around a dungeon.

If there was a Rift Museum guide, then this dungeon may not be as bad as the other dungeons.

'It's completely different from the Cursed Shrine… '

The problem with the Cursed Shrine was that there wasn't any information. The reason why the entire Blue Guild had been shaken up to the core was that it was barely rated as an epic-ranked dungeon. As such, the fact that there was a special NPC for the Rift Museum wasn't that bad.

'Is it okay for me to think that there won't be any annoying traps or complicated issues?'

We could create groups for the other areas…

'For now, it's not that bad.'

At least, it wouldn't be like last time when I had to think hard or worry about things aside from capturing the dungeon.

Obviously, the report the survivor had created couldn't have every detail about the dungeon, but it was better than nothing. It didn't take me long to flip through the thick report. Kim Hyun-Sung saw me reading the report seriously, so he remained quiet.

'Nothing would really change just because I'm reading it… '

[Unranked Dungeon, Rift Museum, Report.]

[This report was created based on the testimony of the Black Swan Guild's survivor who received a guide from the Rift Museum's dungeon guide.]

[The first half lists the guide's information as is, the middle part lists the progress and the events within the Rift Museum dungeon, and the last part is regarding the capture.]

"…"

[According to the Rift Museum guide, the museum has a collection of knowledge and treasures created by the Rift Guardians, a secret organization that has been passed down since ancient times, and Max, the guide, is an Ego Ring created by the guardians.]

[The Rift Guardians couldn't endure the long years, and they weathered by time, losing their existence and significance, making Max the only remaining Rift Guardian. A representative will be elected among the participants of the dungeon capture, and to keep the dungeon's peace, only a maximum of 30 Explorers are allowed. The museum Explorers can start exploring the dungeon after wearing the guide's ring, and they cannot leave until the exploration is complete, or they can also pay the price by being forced to capture the dungeon.]

"……"

[The dungeon capture can only be completed after sealing the Rift Guardian or defeating three of the contracted named monsters. There is no other way. The named

monsters managed by the museum are not only from the main continent, but they are also from outside. Some transcendent beings take form in contracts, not seals.]

"*Ha*…"

[There are a total of 500 monsters in the museum. There are 3 types of named monsters above legendary rank, 30 types of legendary-ranked monsters, more than 400 types of epic-ranked monsters, and the remaining are rare-ranked monsters.]

'This is… completely… '

[The three named monsters selected are completely random.]

'…'

[There are three types of museum exploration rewards. There are 3 types of equipment above legendary rank, 30 types of legendary-ranked equipment, over 400 types of epic-ranked equipment, and the remaining equipment are rare-ranked… omit.]

'…'

[The rewards are also completely random.]

'This is completely based on luck… '

Even if we defeat a legendary-ranked monster, we could obtain a rare-ranked reward and vice versa.

Park Deok-Gu quietly peeking at the report must have understood that much at least.

"This is not worth the effort…"

I nodded at Park Deok-Gu's mutter.

CHAPTER 229
RIFT MUSEUM (2)

“This is not worth the effort,” Lee Ji-Hye commented.

“Someone in our guild said the same thing…” I pointed out.

“Who?” she asked.

“Park Deok-Gu,” I replied.

“…”

“…”

“*Oh!* By the way, Kasugano Yuno of the Yozora Guild expressed that she wants to participate in this expedition as well—” she reported.

“She can’t…” I interrupted.

Lee Ji-Hye looked at me with surprise when I gave somewhat of a stern answer. As one of the Eight Seats, I would applaud her if she participated in the expedition, but unfortunately, that only applied if this was an ordinary dungeon.

‘Her luck stat is zero.’

When considering Kasugano Yuno’s luck stats, her offer to help was actually an inconvenience, so I wanted to deny her any interest in this. Honestly, I just wanted to tell her that it was none of her business.

“That’s surprising. I thought you would want to take her…” she said.

“Her luck stat is low,” I informed her.

“*Ah*…”

“Hopelessly low,” I added.

“Have you two gotten close enough to share stats?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“I don’t know the details…”

“*Hm*, perhaps…” she muttered and paused.

It seemed like she was staring at me strangely, but seeing that she didn’t say anything else, I guess it didn’t really matter because she didn’t really care about the people I had met.

I wasn’t sure why she thought I would come back to her eventually, but one thing I could acknowledge was the fact that this task had become easier thanks to her.

‘Maybe, I should have recruited her to the Blue Guild.’

In addition to adapting well to the Black Swan Guild, she had also become successful, so I guess it was a good thing she had joined the Black Swan Guild. Of course, I did kind of feel that it was a shame.

‘It’s comfortable.’

We worked so well together that it was comfortable for me, and when I started reading the expedition profile again, Lee Ji-Hye spoke, “This is hard. It’s difficult to find a balance since the luck stat is important, and it’s my first time focusing on the party this much. The other expeditions had been difficult to handle as well, but not to this extent.”

“…”

“Not only that… not a lot of people have high luck stats. You barely have 70 points, oppa… I thought it would be higher than this…” she added.

“What’s the average luck stat of the people isolated in the museum right now?” I asked.

“*Hm*, maybe 30? There’s probably an error of plus or minus 15 points,” she answered.

“That explains why they have gotten isolated,” I commented.

Disclosing everyone’s luck stat was the most important part of capturing the Rift Museum, so I didn’t have to use Mind’s Eye to find those with high luck stat. To capture this dungeon, Lee Ji-Hye proposed that we disclose our luck stats, and both the Black Swan and Blue Guild agreed to it. I assumed it wouldn’t be difficult to create a party for the expedition, but the fact that not many people had high luck stats had thrown a wrench in the party’s creation. It would be best to form an expedition party with people whose luck stat was over 80, but those with legendary-ranked luck stats had no potential in their other stats.

Out of all the stats players had, luck was the most mysterious stat.

‘It’s understandable.’

No one had studied how a player could increase their luck stat—no one even knew why this stat existed in the first place. Many people with high luck stats died as beggars, and some with low luck stats, like Kasugano Yuno, were on the road to success.

Increasing the strength stat would make you stronger, and increasing the agility stat would make you faster. Simple logic could be applied to the other stats, but the same logic couldn’t be used on the luck stat. Of course, increasing the luck stat…

‘Seems to influence those with production-type jobs… ’

Anyway, we could be grasping at straws for this expedition, but we had no choice but to include those with high luck stat. Obviously, forming a party with only these people would be suicide. Realistically, our goal was to have an average of 60 points in luck stats, so we were trying to create a party with members whose luck was closer to those numbers to take on a legendary-ranked named monster. This was the key to the creation of the party, and it was also the reason why Lee Ji-Hye was struggling.

“What did the Blue Guild decide to do?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“We’re still thinking about it. However, my participation as well as Mr. Hyun-Sung, Ha-Yan, and Miss Hee-Young’s have been confirmed for now,” I replied.

“You’re not taking Mr. Deok-Gu? Didn’t he grow into one of the Blue Guild’s great powers?” she asked.

“That’s what we’re thinking about right now. His other stats are good, but his luck stat has just reached 40 points. If he joins, the average luck stat of the party will drop,” I explained.

“Just put him in. If something bad happens, at least you’ll have someone that can protect you, Oppa. It probably won’t matter since Miss Ha-Yan, Mr. Hyun-Sung and you have high stats. The problem is the Black Swan Guild members. By the way, what is Dialugia going to do?” she asked.

“I think she’s going to participate, but… it’ll be difficult for her to maintain her human form since it’s a dungeon and she’s not good at wielding a weapon, so I don’t really want her to join. But, I’m sure she’ll be useful since her stats are high…” I answered.

“What about your precious daughter?” she questioned.

“If Dialugia decides to join, the remaining members at the Blue Guild will watch over her. I’m worried about leaving Smartie by herself, but Dialugia told me that she had to go, so there’s nothing I can do about that. After all, it’s true that it’ll be dangerous…” I replied.

“Her luck stat was in the 80s when she was in her human form,” Lee Ji-Hye recalled.

“Your guild master, too…” I pointed out.

“Yes, she’s in the 80s as well, so if we form it that way, then we’ll be set for the vanguards. I think we can handle any named monsters that appear, and Mr. Deok-Gu in particular—”

“He will definitely be helpful. Having a pure tank with the stats to take on a legendary-ranked monster’s attack is pretty rare,” I interrupted.

“The priests are kind of weak, but I don’t think there’s anything we can do about that. Creating the rearguard party is getting difficult. We can’t focus on one area since we don't know if the named monster will be resistant to physical or magic attacks…” she muttered.

“We’ll have to discuss the party formation more, and the guild masters are probably discussing many things about this expedition as well… They’re the experts in killing monsters, and we’re just giving our opinions as the strategy team. We just need to

submit our report and give the list of names. When is the next meeting?" I asked.

"In two hours…" Lee Ji-Hye replied.

"Look over the supply team for me," I requested.

"What about the party? We still need to go through our guild…" she reminded me.

"I'll take care of it," I told her.

She looked at me with doubt as if asking if I could really do it, but she immediately nodded, and I understood why she questioned me. However, there was no way she knew the fact that I knew the Black Swan Guild very well. While visiting the Black Swan Guild a few times, I checked the members' attributes and overall stats using Mind's Eye. Obviously, I memorized the stats of those who were executive members at the least, so it was better for me to form the party by myself. Considering their stats, job, and even their nature, I was the only one who could do this.

'It would be a different story if everyone revealed their status windows… '

There were many things people tended to hide, and it was even more true when it came to their natures and habits. It didn't happen often, but people would sometimes use the fact that others couldn't see their status window to give false information. As such, I was the only person on this continent who could form a *proper* expedition party.

'A party's formation involves statistics."

Based on the Black Swan Guild's expedition data accumulated over time, I had to think about which jobs had good compatibility when it came to the party. You could easily find the answer when comparing the dungeon capture to a soccer match and thinking of the expedition members as the 11 players of a soccer team. You have to think about the win rate when selecting two players together, the win rate of a specific player when they played at home and when they were away, and the win rate of a specific player when they were playing against their rival. Winning the match represented the success of the expedition and losing represented failure. Of course, there were things I couldn't explain with this type of explanation alone.

'It's just simple statistics, anyway.'

There would be variables during the actual expedition and it was up to the party to handle the variables. Some people who sit at a desk all day may say that forming a party was useless, but… But if the players could have a match on their own in the first place, then a director or coach wasn't needed.

Statistics would never lie. It was a lot more convincing than the power of friendship, spirit, or vigor, which were indescribable elements. The number of deaths and injuries from previous expeditions and the success rate in expeditions involving specific members were the information that made the party formation possible for me.

'Like… What type of people usually fail the expedition?'

Obviously, I wasn't a god and I knew that judging people solely based on their nature and habit was dangerous, but to increase our success rate even just a *little* bit, it wasn't a bad idea to give a numerical value even to the most trivial things.

Because…

Our regressor was a bit anxious.

Unlike the optimistic Park Deok-Gu who said that we just had to be lucky, Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't been able to hide his nervousness as soon as this expedition was confirmed. It was obvious why our confident and lovely regressor was reacting that way.

'Has he experienced it before?'

This was just my assumption, but he had probably experienced the Rift Museum before, and if that wasn't the case, then he must have heard of this dungeon, at the very least. I was assuming his comrades had gotten annihilated after a mythic-ranked monster appeared before them, and I was sure the battle had been one-sided. He had always been serious and had constantly been thinking about how this was dangerous, so he had been training with his sword more often and had been working even harder to prepare for this expedition. He was also probably worried about those sealed or contracted transcendent beings. I was sure there was a monster out there he believed was difficult to handle by himself.

'I'll carry you.'

There wasn't much I could do, but I could at least help him with this. It had been a while since I was this focused. Actually, it had been a while since I was this busy after distributing the majority of my tasks to other people. Lee Ji-Hye had to have realized how busy I was because she left the office long ago.

I was immersed on forming the expedition party for quite a while. The meeting started and the report of the unit I had formed was delivered to Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo. Obviously…

"Mr. Hyun-Sung, your sub guild master… he's very competent. No, how… how is… this possible?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

The expedition I had formed obviously brought immediate results at the demonstration training, and it shocked the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild.

'I was lucky… '

CHAPTER 230
RIFT MUSEUM (3)

It was just the mock training that had ended, yet the expedition members seemed inspired. Some were shouting, while some were nodding. I thought it was only natural for them to be hyped because even Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung had their fists clenched.

'It's natural… '

Because even I felt an indescribable joy even though I had just participated in the training just now, and most of them were probably having fun because whether it was sports or games, it was just right to find them fun. Obviously, this was a different type of training, but like the orchestra members who thought their ensemble was perfect, they were filled with joy. If I were to compare it to soccer, it was like ten players had worked together to get the perfect goal, and if I were to compare it to a game of AOS[1], the five players had just executed the perfect team fight.

The training started and ended smoothly; the expedition group of nearly thirty people had moved as one throughout. They moved in sync, and the way they swapped and the timing of their movements were perfect. I created this party, but even I was surprised by the result. However, the one with the biggest reaction was Park Yeon-Joo, the Guild Master and the Leader of the Black Swan Guild's attack team. It was a surprise because I remembered they had doubts when I suggested an unfamiliar party formation to them.

'This is kind of strange. Some of the guild's party one members are missing as well… '

The Black Swan Guild's attack team reacted indifferently about it, and I understood why. The first party I had formed was just a test, and from their point of view, they were disappointed that some of the party one members were missing.

'I still think it's worth testing it out.'

Thanks to our lovely regressor's comment and Park Yeon-Joo agreeing to it, the temporary expedition team became the official team not even thirty minutes after

the training started.

While I was nodding with satisfaction, Park Yeon-Joo spoke while cleaning her equipment, “This is really… surprising. To be honest, I had no trust in this team you made… but this… I’m sure it'll be different during the actual expedition, but it feels so different.”

It was funny how Kim Hyun-Sung seemed prouder than me.

‘This guy… ’

I was satisfied because that expression was proof that he trusted me, and I had once proven I was useful.

“You’ve demonstrated outstanding abilities in many fields, Mr. Ki-Young. To be honest, this is my first time letting someone else form an expedition party of 30 people, so I was kind of worried, but I’m glad it worked out,” she added.

“First time?” I asked.

“Yes. *Oh*, I commanded a large army during the Castle Rock defense war, but it’s my first time forming an expedition party with just 30 people,[2]” she replied.

“*Ha*…”

“I have always thought about how you’re very talented, Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung complimented.

“No, Mr. Hyun-Sung. This isn’t something that can be explained with talent alone. Would it be easier to understand if I said that out of all the hunts, expeditions, and training I have experienced so far, today was the most perfect? This is really… it really doesn’t make sense. It was only yesterday that Mr. Ki-Young received the information about my guild members, and I am sure he hasn’t even memorized all of their names just yet…” Park Yeon-Joo pointed out.

“*Hahahaha*,” I chuckled.

“Forming a large army and an expedition party is completely different, so based on common sense, this is just too strange. There was also the requirement of having an average of 60 luck stats…” she added.

It seemed like Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't *that* anxious anymore because he looked like he was in a better mood.

'Why do you look like you're feeling prouder than me?'

It wasn't just Kim Hyun-Sung. Even Park Deok-Gu and Jung Ha-Yan, who would participate in this expedition were acting proud in front of everyone. I guess they were enjoying themselves, as they were receiving a ton of questions from the other members of the Black Swan Guild.

"Our hyung-nim is a genius! A genius! Genius!" Park Deok-Gu exclaimed.

I could kind of hear Park Deok-Gu's voice.

'Don't compliment me like that, you bastard.'

It was nice to be complimented like that, but the problem was that he had the habit of embellishing it. Even while the expedition members were starting to get to know each other, Park Yeon-Joo was still staring at me. Her flustered expression was making me nervous.

"How did you do this?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

"It's simple. It's just statistics," I replied.

"I already know you created data by putting numerical values on the report written on the expedition log. Our guild's dungeon attack strategy team has been doing that as well," she said.

"Miss Ji-Hye has been a huge help to me as well…" I added.

"Ji-Hye? *Ah*, of course, she's competent and smart, but…"

Honestly, I couldn't say I had done all this on my own. Forming the unit was solely up to me, but using the data that Lee Ji-Hye had made earlier, I was able to get the results I wanted. She actually helped me with the expedition members' movements and swaps. In addition to that, she didn't share that data with her own guildmates, so it was only right for me to say that she had been a massive help. On top of that, Lee Ji-Hye was…

'A leader... '

Since that was the job she had picked, she was a bit more knowledgeable in this field than me. Basically, there was a synergistic effect that even the system acknowledged, and even I was surprised by the result.

'I was lucky... '

Usually, you would have to revise several times when doing a test, but we had basically hit the jackpot during the first try. It was like we got a hole-in-one even though we just carelessly struck the golf ball. I thought it would take at least three days to form the party, but we succeeded on the first try, and if I were asked to do it again, I wouldn't be able to do it.

"She's competent, but this doesn't make sense… Mr. Ki-Young, if you don't mind, the Black Swan…"

Park Yeon-Joo had to have received quite a shock, as it felt like she was going to say something she shouldn't say in front of Kim Hyun-Sung. When Kim Hyun-Sung cleared his throat, she must have realized that she had made a mistake, as her face turned red.

"*Ah*, I'm sorry, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I just—" she paused.

"It's fine, Guild Master. As the leader of a group, it's natural to covet a talent," he said.

"*Ah!* It wasn't a recruitment offer. I was just really interested… If you don't mind, could you share with me what other methods you used? It doesn't have to be today…" she requested.

"*Hm*…"

Now that I thought about it, I still owed Park Yeon-Joo thanks to her help with the issue involving Park Deok-Gu, so I thought it was only right for me to give her a tip. If I were to explain everything from the beginning, then I would have to reveal my attribute, so I had no choice but to make up a reasonable explanation. I do feel kind of bad toward the Black Swan Guild's attack team, but…

'I should still tell her.'

“I was just really lucky. I originally planned for this to last three days…” I started.

“Even three days is pretty surprising,” she remarked.

“*Ahem*… anyway, I do have my reasons for not being able to tell you everything, but the one thing I can tell you is that because I’m an outsider, I was able to form this strange party and bring this kind of result,” I continued.

“What?” she questioned.

“From what I heard, you had no choice but to make your internal attack strategy team with retired members, so your formation and parties would naturally be influenced by them…” I pointed out.

“Yes, you’re right,” she agreed.

“It means those people are also being influenced by their relationship with others. Even when two people have the same abilities, a better party would be formed if they were in the same party with the person they like more. I’m sure there are people in your second group whose abilities are being wasted, and the people I discovered fall into that category. This doesn’t really happen in small to mid-sized guilds like ours, but it’s different for the Black Swan and Red Mercenary Guild,” I explained.

“*Ahhh*… I see,” she commented.

“Once that issue is figured out, the situation will be even better than before,” I suggested.

“Thank you for the advice,” she said.

“No, it was a good experience for me, and we only got this result because the members were well-trained, to begin with. As expected from the Black Swan Guild,” I complimented.

It was only for a moment, but I saw a slightly cold expression on Park Yeon-Joo despite the friendly atmosphere, and that was when I recalled what Lee Ji-Hye had told me before.

“The way people socialize here is pretty bad. It’s not because the guild is filled with

women, but it's obvious that they have split into groups and are fighting amongst each other. Ugh."

I remember how Lee Ji-Hye had complained by saying that it was the Black Swan's weakness and based on Park Yeon-Joo's expression, I was sure she was stressed about a similar issue. I wasn't certain, but after this expedition, I had a feeling that the guild would go through some internal changes.

'I feel bad… '

It wasn't really my business, but I suddenly became curious about the fate of the struggling dungeon attack strategy team.

'It could be good news for Lee Ji-Hye.'

She could have been waiting for me to say something like this.

When I turned my head slightly, I saw Lee Ji-Hye smiling, so I instantly realized that my assumption was correct. When I pushed away the trivial thoughts in my head, I heard Kim Hyun-Sung talking.

"Good job, Mr. Ki-Young."

"It was nothing. I didn't really do much… Ji-Hye really helped me a lot this time, and as I said before, I was just lucky. The result even surprised me," I told him.

"You don't need to be so modest," he commented.

'I'm being serious. Why don't you believe me?'

I didn't think he was going to believe me even if I said more things, so it was best to change the subject.

"When are we leaving…?"

"I think we're going to leave earlier than we planned. Originally, I was going to spend more time with the preparations because we never expected the expedition party to be formed this quickly. There's probably going to be a change in the schedule," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“It’s good news for the Black Swan Guild,” Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

“It is. Miss Yeon-Joo is pretending to be fine, but she’s pretty anxious. From what I heard, there are many members she cherishes very much in the dungeon, so I’m sure she wants to rescue them as soon as possible,” she explained.

“I see,” he said.

When I lifted my head slightly and looked at Kim Hyun-Sung, he seemed anxious, unlike before. He was often making that expression recently, but he looked more anxious today than usual. It didn’t really fit him, but it was like looking at a puppy that had to go pee. It was as if the proud expression he had displayed earlier had been an illusion. He looked as if there was something he wanted to say because he kept moving his lips, but he couldn’t find the words for it.

‘This guy… is there something else he’s worried about?’

I couldn’t be the answer to his problems, but it was also my job to care for his mental health. I had no choice but to speak up first since he was having a difficult time talking.

“Is there something you want to say?”

“*Ah*… I guess it’s pretty obvious,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“That’s not true…” I replied.

I guess he had gained some confidence because I heard him talking. I thought maybe it was going to be about the expedition, but what he said was something completely different.

“I…” he started.

“Yes?” I asked.

“Well… the Black Swan Guild’s master didn’t say it was a recruitment offer earlier, but—” he paused.

“*Ah*, you’re talking about the conversation earlier.” I pointed out.

“Yes, about that…”

Kim Hyun-Sung was being really hesitant and nervous, so I immediately realized what he was thinking.

‘Your hyung isn’t going anywhere.’

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1. Aeon of Strife. It's an old video game terminology used by Koreans because of Starcraft. It's basically a MOBA (Multiplayer online battle arena) like League of Legends ☜

2. It’s her first time to form an expedition party as well as letting someone do it for her. Ki-Young has basically taken both of her firsts in this field xD ☜

CHAPTER 231
WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM (1)

I was happy that my importance was getting reinforced in Kim Hyun-Sung's mind. I had always been playing a key role in Kim Hyun-Sung's kingdom, so the situation back then had to have made his heart quiver. Actually, it was possible that he came to a realization that I had become more important than ever. I couldn't help but smile when I recalled the question he asked a few days ago.

'Your hyung isn't going anywhere.'

I was sure he was curious since other guilds may want to recruit me, and objectively speaking…

'I am pretty talented.'

It was ironic that I was evaluating myself, but I—Lee Ki-Young—had been a massive influence on the Blue Guild. The potions being produced in the Blue Guild's potion factory were not only being distributed within Lindel but they were also being distributed in Celia and Dawan, which meant the guild was earning a lot of money. On top of that, I was slowly spreading my wings by managing the administration team, along with the potion business.

If I were to exaggerate a bit, the Blue Guild no longer needed to go on expeditions because we could live off the potion business alone. However, that wasn't the only thing I had achieved.

The triple alliance between the Red Mercenary, Black Swan, and the Yozora Guild where Kasugano Yuno belonged to was only made possible thanks to me. In addition, I was also the Holy Empire's Honorary Bishop. Setting aside my closeness to the Vatican, I also had a close relationship with the powerful nobles, so I was already an important figure, diplomatically. Moreover, I was a seatholder of the Eight Seats, and I also owned the dragon, Dialugia. As such, I could be exaggerating a bit here, but I wouldn't have any trouble leaving the Blue Guild and creating my own.

Kim Hyun-Sung was worried about that.

'Why?'

There wasn't anything he could offer me right now. Neither gold, position, nor items were suitable as an offer. I had received the benefits that he had given me at the start, but right now, our positions in society were almost the same, and I feel kind of bad for saying this, but it wasn't an exaggeration to say that I was a bit more superior. The innocent Lee Ki-Young in the past happy with just a rare-ranked item was no longer here.

This wasn't the greatest example, but it was like the couple that had been dating since they were students had grown into adults. The small accessories, events, and the warm cup of coffee they often drank on rainy days were starting to become dull. Since their standards had increased, they had no idea what they had to do, what kind of gifts they should get for each other, and what they had to say to make their partner happy. This was especially applicable when their partner became successful in society to the extent that they lacked nothing. By then, even luxury bags, wallets, or jewelry wouldn't be enough as gifts. In that case, it was only natural for them to think—

'Will they be happy with this?'

Picking out a gift for someone who had nothing was easy.

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't used to having relationships with other people, so he would naturally have an even more difficult time.

'Those aren't the kind of things your hyung wants, Hyun-Sung.'

Obviously, I wasn't expecting expensive gifts or legendary-ranked items. Rather…

"Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung called out.

"Yes?" I answered.

'Yeah, this is what I want, Hyun-Sung.'

He was quietly handing me a warm cup of coffee. What I wanted were the small things.

'That's the answer.'

I felt kind of proud, and even Kim Hyun-Sung himself seemed proud when he realized that I was kind of happy.

"*Oh my… oh my…*"

"Did you see it just now?"

"*Oh, dear…*"

"They look good…"

The indescribable voices and gazes around us were strange.

"They say that this coffee came from another kingdom. You looked kind of tired…" Kim Hyun-Sung pointed out.

"Thank you. I honestly couldn't sleep last night, but I think this will help," I thanked him.

"That's a relief…" he muttered.

The people around weren't openly staring at us, but it felt like they were glancing at us.

'I think I know why… '

It was natural for them to stare at us because aside from Kim Hyun-Sung, Park Deok-Gu, Ahn Ki-Mo, and me, the remaining expedition members were women.

'…'

Women were everywhere, and this place was the reason why Jung Ha-Yan and Hwang Jung-Yeon seemed a bit depressed lately. Jung Ha-Yan looked better since she was participating in the expedition, but seeing Hwang Jung-Yeon's expression as she was sending Park Deok-Gu off made me think that she was more worried about something else. It was the same for Kim Ye-Ri, who didn't get chosen for this expedition.

Her eyes were always on Kim Hyun-Sung, so I recalled her expression when it was revealed she wasn't one of the chosen members. To Kim Ye-Ri, whose expression

barely changed, this was a rare situation. Kim Hyun-Sung had probably made that decision for her safety, and because the Black Swan Guild's assassin ratio was high, there wasn't a need to include her. However, Kim Ye-Ri's expression was *too* serious.

'Considering the fact that her lovely oppa is going to spend a few weeks at a place like that… '

I would have been worried as well if I were in her shoes.

When I glanced around, I saw things you would normally find in a female-dominated guild.

"Did you bring your pads?"

"I did, unnie. I got the one packed with the supplies."

"I really hope I don't start during the expedition… It makes moving around uncomfortable, and it puts me in a bad mood."

"Seriously. They don't even have medicine here. I wish someone would develop a spell for it…"

"Wouldn't alchemy solve this?"

They were talking about things that seemed like it was a big deal, and it wasn't that they were being careless, but it was more like they didn't care about who would hear them.

One thing I was certain of was that the women who grew up to be adventurers on this continent were completely different from the women on Earth. They seemed more open-minded about the idea of sex and were more independent. Since their physical stats were almost the same as the men's, they were more easy-going and indifferent about how others thought of them.

Even the smallest details could make a difference. Whether I was looking at them or not, I could see them sitting on chairs and changing into armors resembling stockings. It was then that I felt Jung Ha-Yan pulling at my sleeve.

'It's nothing like that, Ha-Yan. There's nothing I can do about this. It's like being idle.'

The majority of the assassins and archers were wearing revealing armor, but if that were the only issue, I was sure Kim Ye-Ri and Hwang Jung-Yeon wouldn't have been *that* worried. Even more dangerous than those defenseless women was the group staring at me.

'It's not bad.'

Basically, the four men here were decent husband material based on this continent's standards. Kim Hyun-Sung had the body of a model and the face of a celebrity, and he had made the impossible *possible* in just one year. I wasn't as handsome as him, but I also had a fanbase, which I wasn't really happy about. I was sure they wanted Park Deok-Gu as well because of his large frame and muscles.

'Ahn Ki-Mo too… '

He didn't seem to have any distinct characteristics, but because he once aspired to be an actor, his appearance wasn't bad. The important part was that our positions in society and futures were all guaranteed. In addition to possessing power, which was an important element in this continent, we were the executives of a recently emerged venture company as well, so it was understandable that they were trying to make a good impression.

'We're all pretty old… '

Age was just a number, of course. But since they were in their late 20s to early 30s, they wanted to form a good relationship with us. Usually, players at their level had high standards. Weak men wouldn't satisfy them, so they would dump them even before those men could approach them. They would flirt with a few good-looking men, but none of them would commit. Regardless of gender and whether it was here or on Earth, the idea that both sides had to meet certain standards was still there, and surprisingly, Park Deok-Gu was the most popular among us.

'Harem King Park Deok-Gu… '

After saying goodbye to Hwang Jung-Yeon, I was a bit jealous to see him getting surrounded by women. Park Deok-Gu didn't even notice how Hwang Jung-Yeon was biting her lips.

"Can I try hanging off your arm?"

“You can… *ahem*…” Park Deok-Gu replied.

“Look how strong his body is. It’s all muscles.”

“You’re really tall.”

“Well, I ate and slept a lot which helped me grow a lot,” he told them.

Seeing Park Deok-Gu being surrounded by women who laughed at trivial things showed that he was truly Gangwon Province’s Love Doctor. They didn’t bother to approach Kim Hyun-Sung since their Guild Master Park Yeon-Joo already had her eyes on him. Since I was already in a relationship with the Mercenary Queen, it made it difficult for them to approach me. The biggest issue was probably Jung Ha-Yan since she was glaring at them while holding on to my sleeve, but since I was a guy as well, I was envious of Park Deok-Gu.

Unlike them, the remaining members of the expedition seemed to be in a good mood. Once another person joined us, the expedition party would be complete. The last person we were waiting for was slowly walking toward us.

“*Kyaaaaaah!*”

The person’s identity was obvious. It was Dialugia, the special bodyguard.

‘I told her not to bring Smartie… I should have been stricter.’

We were about to part ways, but seeing that she brought Smartie with her, I guess she must have failed in leaving Smartie behind. I understood Dialugia’s feelings, but I was certain that parting ways here would be even worse.

‘Then what was the point of saying goodbye yesterday… ’

Regardless of her feelings, the expedition party was starting to get busy.

“*Ah*… you’re here. Greet everyone, and then we can leave,” I suggested.

“Okay,” Dialugia replied.

“*Kyaah… kyaaaaah…*”

“Let’s get ready to leave,” Park Yeon-Joo ordered.

“Yes, Guild Master,” the members answered.

“Ji-Hye, you packed all the supplies, right?” she asked.

“Yes, unnie,” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

“Take care of the guild for me,” she requested

“Don’t worry, and have a safe trip,” she assured.

Lee Ji-Hye and the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild Park Yeon-Joo said their farewells.

“*Kyaaaaaah… kyaaaah!*”

“We’re heading out now. Please take care of everyone, Miss Jung-Yeon. Also, the rookies’ training—”

“Just leave it to me, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” she interrupted.

“Okay, I’ll leave it up to you,” he repeated.

“Okay…”

“I’ll be back soon, Ye-Ri. Miss Hye-Jin, we need to prepare for departure…”

“Yes, Guild Master,” Jo Hye-Jin answered.

In addition to saying goodbye to Hwang Jung-Yeon, who would be in charge of the guild while Kim Hyun-Sung and I were away, he was also comforting Kim Ye-Ri. I saw him walking out the door with Jo Hye-Jin. Even Jung Ha-Yan, who was wary of her surroundings, was saying goodbye to the other members.

“*Kyaaah… kyaaaah… kyaaaaaah!*”

However, I couldn’t join them because I had to go through a grand farewell ceremony.

“*Kyaaah… kyaah…*”

“Don’t cause any trouble, Dialuria. Mom is… mom is—” Dialugia paused.

“*Kyaaah…*”

“It won’t take long, and our friends will be with you. It might be a little bit uncomfortable since you won’t be at the nest, but there are a lot of things you can play with, so you won’t be bored,” she told Smartie.

“*Kyah…*”

“I’m sorry for leaving you like this, my baby…” she muttered.

“*Kyaaaaaah!*”

“Smartie… Daddy and Mommy have something important to take care of. You can wait for us, right?” I asked.

“*Kyah… kyaaaaaaaaah! Kyaaaaaaah!*”

When tears started falling out of her eyes, my heart started to break, and I was sure that even Dialugia’s heart was being ripped into pieces.

“Dialuria, it’ll make it harder for me if you cry…” Dialugia said.

“*Kyah…*”

“Dialugia, we need to get going. Everyone is waiting…” I informed her.

“Wait… let me hug you one last time, my baby…” she said.

It was kind of beautiful how the mother and daughter were sad together, but the expedition party was already prepared to depart. It was kind of embarrassing to waste time here, so ending this with one last hug was the best thing to do. As such, Dialugia opened her arms.

“Dialuria…” she called out.

That was when Smartie passed by Dialugia.

”*Kyaaaaah kyaaah! Pant, pant! Kyaaah!*”

It didn't take long for Smartie to pass by Dialugia to come to me while whimpering and crying.

"Dia… luria?" her mother mumbled.

"*Kyaaaaah! Kyaaah… pant… kyaaaaah!*"

I felt bad when she kept burying her face into my chest while whimpering.

"*Kyaaaah… kyah. Kyaaaaah!*"

Smartie was even shrieking at the expedition party waiting to leave.

"*Kyaaaaah! Kyaaaaaaaah!*"

"You won't cause any trouble, right Smartie?" I asked.

"*Kyah… kyaah…*"

"Once this is over, I'll play with you for an entire week so just wait until then," I promised her.

"*Kyaah… kyah…*"

Dialugia watched with a sorrowful expression as Smartie licked my face.

"Di… Dia… luria?" she mumbled again.

Anyone could tell that she had been betrayed.

CHAPTER 232
WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM (2)

"*Kyaaah. Kyah…"*

"Dialuria…" Dialugia called out.

It seemed as if she was questioning Smartie's betrayal, and I was shocked by it as well. I knew I would see the mother and daughter's sad parting, but what I saw was the face of a mother who felt as if her daughter had betrayed her.

"*Kyaaaah…"*

Smartie definitely hadn't noticed her mother's shocked expression because she continued to bury her face into my chest while wagging her tail. When I lightly patted her head, her whimper turned into panting, and she even flipped her body to show her stomach. Naturally, my hand reached out toward her stomach. I used to think that she was like a dog sometimes, but it felt like it had gotten worse today. It seemed like she was trying to act cute since we were going to be leaving soon, but Dialugia looked grim while she was watching us with her mouth agape and eyes quivering.

'Is she acting different from usual?'

When Smartie was still the size of a puppy, I recall her mother following her around. Even back then, I felt that Smartie cared about me more than her mother, but now that she had grown to the size of a teenager, I suddenly realized that I had no clue about what she was like when she was alone with her mother. Judging from Dialugia's *extremely* exhausted face, I knew Smartie was giving her a hard time, but…

'Did she not show this side of hers to her mother?'

Based on Dialugia's reaction, I was sure Smartie had never shown her stomach to her mother, and I finally realized what the '#Mom is Frustrating Too' unique habit meant. Our Children Have Changed.[1] I naturally wanted to try and broadcast the same program. I started to question if Smartie was looking down on her mother for being

so devoted to her.

'That's not good… '

It was already too late to salvage her unique habit, but I really wanted her to grow up to be normal. Many thoughts filled my head, but since I couldn't do anything right now, I decided to push those thoughts away for now.

The expedition party was staring at us from far away. It was time to leave, so when I said something to Smartie, she replied right away.

"Smartie… Daddy has to leave now…"

"*Kyaaah*…"

As expected, she whimpered as if she was telling me not to leave, and she definitely understood me because her eyes started to fill with tears. I guess she was waiting for me to hug her because she opened her arms, and when I hugged her lightly, I heard her panting discreetly.

"*Ah…*"

Dialugia looked at us incredulously, so I had no choice but to say something because her mother looked as if she was out of it.

"Smartie, you should say goodbye to your mom, too."

The way Dialugia looked at me with appreciation looked kind of cute. Smartie looked as if she didn't want to do what I said, but Dialugia quickly approached her, as she was afraid that she might miss this chance, so she hugged Smartie while crying.

"We won't take long, so if you listen, I'll play with you all day," I promised her.

"*Kyah!*"

"Dialugia, it's time to go," I informed her.

"Okay. Dialuria, Mom is…"

"*Kyah!*"

The situation came to an end when we handed over Dialuria to Hwang Jung-Yeon and Kim Ye-Ri. We immediately headed toward the castle gate without looking back, I could hear Smartie's screams, but I knew I shouldn't look back.

"Don't look back…" I told Dialugia.

"B-But—" she stuttered.

"You have to be strict," I advised.

"…"

"If you look back and keep responding to her, it'll be difficult to part with her. I don't know much about the ecology of dragons, but Dialuria should be old enough to be by herself. I'm sure she'll need help with many things, but the guild members will take care of her," I assured her.

"…"

I wanted to give her a lot of advice, but unfortunately, I wasn't an expert. I had never raised a child before, and I never had a dog as well. As such, it was better to stay quiet than to pretend I was knowledgeable.

"*Kyaaaaah!*"

When I saw how Dialugia flinched every time she heard Smartie's sad cries, I was sure she would have already run back to Dialuria if I wasn't here. I saw how she was trying to hold her tears back.

"I'm sorry for being late," I apologized.

"It's fine, Mr. Ki-Young. It still doesn't change the fact that we're leaving earlier than planned, and your situation was understandable…"

After saying that, Park Yeon-Joo looked at Dialugia.

"It's nice to meet you, Dialugia. I have seen you before at your nest, but this is our first official meeting. I'm Park Yeon-Joo."

"I'm Dialugia."

“I appreciate you joining us,” Park Yeon-Joo said.

Dialugia nodded lightly.

She seemed really dejected. She probably needed some time to cope with the sadness whenever she thought about Smartie.

“Let’s get into the carriage. We’ll have to travel for about two days,” she announced.

“Okay…”

“You should rest inside, Dialugia,” she suggested.

“I will,” she replied.

There were a total of five carriages, and they were filled with luggage. It was going to be a pretty rough expedition because the supplies contained food the party was going to eat during the expedition, first-aid supplies for the people isolated inside the Rift Museum, as well as trivial items like clothes.

‘Their carriage is pretty nice… ’

After letting Dialugia get inside the carriage the Blue Guild was riding, I looked around and realized that it wasn’t just the size that was nice.

‘We should get one, too.’

Honestly, I never thought we needed a large carriage since our parties had always been small on expeditions. I didn’t think about changing the Blue Guild’s carriage since it wasn’t all that bad, but I changed my mind after getting inside the Black Swan Guild’s carriage. The interior resembled a campervan, and my mouth went agape when I saw a room inside the carriage.

‘I knew official guild members are entitled to great benefits.’

Since it was a female-dominated guild, they had benefits like this. Park Deok-Gu and Ahn Ki-Mo had entered the room before me, but they were still looking around with amazement.

“This is really nice,” Ahn Ki-Mo commented.

“Hey, weren’t you part of the Red Mercenary Guild, Ki-Mo bro? This kind of carriage…”

“It’s true that the guild had a large carriage, but they didn’t manage it very well. The seats and the other parts of the carriage weren’t great, and the Mercenary Queen didn’t really like going on expeditions comfortably. She said it was better to invest in equipment rather than things like these. The issue was also because the guild required mages and priests,” Ahn Ki-Mo explained.

“What do you mean?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Pulling a carriage this big will be difficult for the horses. No, actually, it’s impossible. As such, the mages have to keep using their mana on the horses to prevent them from collapsing due to the weight, the priests also have to use their holy power,” he replied.

“*Ahhh*…”

“The Black Swan Guild has probably hired their coachmen separately since it seemed that the majority of them are abandoned mages without potential or those with no more room for improvement,” he added.

“I see…” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“You don’t need to be so sad, Mr. Deok-Gu. This is good news for them, too. I believe their wages are higher than you think and basically, the guild has created a job for them. It’s perfect for those talentless mages,” he continued.

“*Ah*, you’re right! Hyung-nim, how about we do the same?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“It does sound like a good idea…” I said.

“It is!” he exclaimed.

The female members, Jung Ha-Yan, Sun Hee-Young, and Jo Hye-Jin, looked happier than Park Deok-Gu, and even though they didn’t express it, it seemed like they were pretty envious of the Black Swan Guild members for having these kinds of amenities.

Just then, Kim Hyun-Sung exited his room and spoke after organizing his belongings.

“I was actually thinking about doing something like this since we got some new recruits, and we’re planning on creating another party as well.”

It was amusing how their faces brightened up when the Guild Master confirmed it. Obviously, Dialugia didn’t really care about it, but this kind of amenity wasn’t for her in the first place.

A small smile appeared on Kim Hyun-Sung’s face as he continued talking. It was a different topic, but since it was regarding the dungeon we were heading to, they focused on him.

“And about this expedition…”

“Yes?”

“From now on, we won’t have separate meetings or training time. The expedition executives will still have meetings and we’ll announce any changes to our plans while we eat, but for now, the information you’ll need to study up on is written here, so you can read over this,” he announced.

“Okay, Guild Master.”

“Once we enter the dungeon, we’re going to get pretty busy, so it’s probably best to think of this as the final moments to relax until we reach the dungeon,” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“Got it…”

Despite saying that, we couldn’t relax since we were heading to a dungeon. Kim Hyun-Sung himself and even Jung Ha-Yan looked as if they couldn’t relax.

‘Because capturing a dungeon would always be dangerous… ’

This wasn’t our first rodeo, so it was a fact we all knew very well.

Once he was done with his speech, the carriage started to move and some spent time by themselves while others spent time with each other. Like Kim Hyun-Sung mentioned earlier, he made brief announcements of the changes to our plans, as well as reports while we were resting and whenever we had free time, we would either organize the supplies or fix them. Personally, it was a bit boring, but these repetitive

meetings and studying should come in handy.

I would look out the window sometimes, and whenever I did that, I would realize that the carriage was moving faster than before. Park Yeon-Joo wasn't showing it, but it seemed that she was quite anxious.

Exactly two days after our departure, we arrived at an area the carriage could no longer enter. The guild staff members started to unload our supplies, while we started walking toward our destination. When the guild staff members with us arrived at the danger zone, we saw them wearing large backpacks, so I instantly realized just how much they had prepared for this expedition.

'Even though the actual expedition is kind of different… '

A dungeon capture probably wouldn't take that long, and the only reason why those bags were stuffed full was that we could also get isolated inside the dungeon. Of course, I didn't say anything to the staff, but I was sure the quick-witted ones had long caught on to it.

'We might fail… '

The executives who prepared for this expedition had considered the possibility of failure and that possibility existed. If a mythic-ranked named monster appeared, it was best to hold out somehow with the power we had.

'Or pay the price for it… '

Anyway, the atmosphere of the expedition wasn't bad. The Harem King Park Deok-Gu was enjoying his prime as he was being surrounded by the female members of the Black Swan Guild and even though it wasn't as much as him, Ahn Ki-Mo had also gotten close with a few of the female members. During our break time, Jung Ha-Yan exercised her privilege by standing close to me. Sun Hee-Young looked like she was having a serious conversation with the priests of the Black Swan Guild, and Jo Hye-Jin, who secretly liked Kim Hyun-Sung, directed a disappointed look at him as he was talking with Park Yeon-Joo.

The scenery kept changing, and the expedition party was about to enter a place that looked as if it was untouched.

'It's pretty… '

Purple light shimmered faintly from the rift of the huge rock wall that seemed to go on forever. The Rift Museum was probably behind the rock wall.

In addition…

[Welcome to the Museum.]

A small child created from magic greeted us.

We entered the unranked dungeon, Rift Museum.

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1. Our Children Have Changed (Korean: 우리 아이가 달라졌어요) is a Korean program about the difficulties of raising children. ☜

CHAPTER 233
WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM (3)

[You have entered the unranked dungeon, Rift Museum.]

[Max Number of People: [30/30] confirmed.]

[Unranked Dungeon Forced Quest will be activated.]

"…"

[Quest - Museum Tour (0/1)]

A message naturally popped up, and it seemed like we received the quest as soon as we entered. I was certain the museum tour meant capturing this dungeon.

After checking the message, I looked around and found a pretty fancy stone chamber. Unlike the outside, which was surrounded by walls, the atmosphere inside was different.

'This is fun.'

I was even more excited when I saw the figure before us. The figure looked like a cute boy, and he greeted us politely as if he knew we were coming.

[Checking Max, the dungeon manager's information.]

[Reading the dungeon manager's dummy using the legendary-ranked attribute,

Mind's Eye.]

[Dungeon Manager Max's Dummy]

[It's a clump of mana created by the manager, Max. Since it's a virtual body, the status window and information window cannot be checked. You have access to limited information about the museum.]

'Maybe that's why… '

I couldn't see the status and information window of the little boy with blond hair. What I saw was simply a description of the dummy.

'The Mind's Eye is pretty useful.'

People at a certain level may realize that he wasn't a real person, but ordinary people like me wouldn't see through it. If it weren't for Mind's Eye, I wouldn't be suspicious of him. He looked like some kind of object, as there were no emotions in his eyes and his polite posture and gestures looked alien for some reason. Some might describe him as handsome, but I found him cute.

'Homunculus?'

No, it couldn't be a homunculus. I had no idea how knowledgeable the Rift Guardians were, but the manager, Max, wasn't a homunculus. In the first place, creating a perfect being could be considered a god's domain. Even if it wasn't a being, creating a figure like this had to be difficult, so I started to become even more curious about the Rift Guardians.

'What the hell is it?'

Before I could organize my thoughts, I heard a voice that made me realize we had officially entered the Rift Museum.

- Welcome to the Rift Museum, Museum Explorers.

"…"

The boy was actually surprised when we calmly nodded.

- You're not aggressive. The people who enter this place usually prepare for battle as soon as they enter this place…

If we had no information about this place, we probably would have done the same thing, as we would have no way to identify whether the being before us was a manager or a named monster.

The silence must have felt awkward for Park Yeon-Joo because she started talking.

Since we had read the report in advance, it was easier to respond to it, and we knew that the test wouldn't start as soon as we entered.

The first thing we had to do was take our time looking around the museum, and the next thing would be to extract information from this unfamiliar boy.

"We received some information from an Explorer who recently explored this museum, and we also know the fact that you're the manager of this place."

- That's what I thought. I let one person leave a few weeks ago, so I guess they sent you here.

"That's right. To be exact, the people isolated in this museum right now are under my command. Are they—" Park Yeon-Joo paused.

- If you're asking whether they're alive or not… Yes, they're still alive.

Park Yeon-Joo looked relieved after hearing Max's answer. We tried to come as fast as possible, but since it took time to come here, she had been anxious all this time.

"That's a relief. Is there a way to save them?" she asked.

- Of course. Giving exhibited items to those who complete the museum expedition is a very reasonable reward. Aside from that, those people still hadn't become a part of the museum displays.

"…"

- To be honest, that was the first time beings from another dimension had come here,

so I thought that maybe it would be a good idea to put them on display, but I felt like it would lower the quality of the museum, so I hesitated.

"…"

- However, after seeing today's visitors, I think it's good that I didn't display those people isolated here.

"What…"

- I never imagined a soul with a distorted causality would visit.

The boy was definitely looking at Kim Hyun-Sung. Thankfully, the boy didn't say anything about Kim Hyun-Sung being a regressor, but to him, Kim Hyun-Sung definitely looked different from the others.

'Does he have Mind's Eye or something?'

That was unlikely. He probably just had a good eye for quality since he was the museum's manager. All he said was that there was a soul with a distorted causality among the visitors, so I didn't think he knew the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung was a regressor. Kim Hyun-Sung himself was calmly staring at the clump.

- And I see a dragon which I heard is hard to see these days.

He then looked at Dialugia.

- How long have you been alive?

"Do I need to answer?" Dialugia asked.

- If my question was rude, then I apologize. It's just that I'm so happy to see a dragon. I recall there being a lot of dragons a long time ago, but when thinking about the dragon's ecology, it wouldn't be strange if your lineage ended at any moment. *Ah!* It was a slip of the tongue. I apologize.

He had to be kind of excited because he became more talkative.

'Is it not a machine?'

Unlike my assumption that he was just a guide, I found out he could feel emotions, and he wasn't a humanoid being without flaws. I was sure this information would be useful later on.

I quietly glanced at Dialugia. She still hadn't gotten over her sadness of parting with Smartie, so she was still depressed, and since the boy was being blunt, it would naturally put her in a bad mood. But instead of getting angry, she simply nodded. As long as Smartie wasn't involved, she was rational and normal.

"There's no need to apologize since more and more dragons are giving up on the idea of having children. It has also been a while since I've seen the others, and as a race, we rarely keep up with our obligations and customs. There's probably less than three dragons that have children," Dialugia explained.

- I see. That's unfortunate. *Hm*… come to think of it, you have a child.

"I had her recently," she said.

- *Ah…* I recall the guardians saying that the dragons were important creatures. Just like the guardians, the dragons existed for the balance and safety of this continent. It's unfortunate that you have a child since it'll be difficult for me to display you in the museum. Instead… *hm*… the dragon's horns…

"I don't plan on leaving my horns in a place like this," Dialugia interrupted.

- Of course, I'm not asking you to give it for free. Got it! How about this? It'll definitely be a good trade.

As soon as the boy finished talking, a rattling sound filled the entire museum. I wasn't sure what was going on, but it felt like the inside of the museum was moving. Not long after, the glass wall at the entrance of the museum was pushed in, and a new glass tube appeared. The interesting part was that there was an item inside the glass wall. The large box was filled with tools I had never seen before.

'That's… '

[Dragon Lord's Parenting Set - Legendary Rank]

[The Dragon Lord that existed tens of thousands of years ago crafted this parenting set himself to increase the birth rate of his race. The set contains many items such as modernized baby bottles, toys that help with brain activity, supplementary devices for babies that can't fly yet, and many more. Unlike other items, this parenting set was crafted by the Dragon Lord himself using his own scale, making it quite valuable.]

'What the… '

I knew there were random items displayed here, but I had never imagined that an item like that would be on display, and that was when Dialugia's eyes widened. I couldn't help but think about the possibility that she would give up her horns for it.

"*Ah!* This is…"

- What do you think?

"W-Where did you get this?" Dialugia stuttered.

- How about it?

If this continued, she might *actually* trade her horns. Obviously, I had to own her from head to toe, so I couldn't let her dedicate her horns to the museum since they were considered her most valuable part. I didn't want to interfere, but I had no choice.

"Dialugia, I'll try making one similar to it. Smartie will be heartbroken knowing that her mother's horns are gone."

"But—" she paused.

"I'll craft an item with the same rank using your scale. Even if it were made using the Dragon Lord's scale, it'd be more meaningful if it's made with her mother's scale."

"*Ah*… I see," she muttered.

I guess she had really gotten bewitched by the item because even though she answered, she couldn't take her eyes off it. Her eyes resembled the eyes of a

housewife watching the channel dedicated for home shopping.

“I’m sure Smartie will like it even more. Also… it does look valuable, but… that’s a second-hand item. Dialugia, if you’re satisfied with it, then you can trade for it, but I don’t want to see our lovely Smartie using a second-hand item,” I added.

I was sure my last comment helped her come to her senses.

‘Second-hand.’

No mother would use second-hand baby bottles.

I felt a bit relieved when Dialugia was no longer attracted to it, and the dungeon manager naturally frowned a bit because he had missed this great chance. However, the boy’s face quickly revealed his surprise.

- You…

“Yes?” I asked.

- You have something shocking as well.

‘Shit… ’

- How could such a lowly and dirty man like you own such a precious thing? Would it be okay if I examine your body closer?

I immediately realized what the boy was talking about.

‘Mind’s Eye?’

Out of all the things I possessed, my attribute was the only thing I could show off. In addition to its legendary rank, many of its abilities were still locked so I knew that Mind’s Eye was pretty valuable, but I had never imagined that the museum manager would get shocked by it when he owned mythic-ranked items.

‘Maybe… it’s possible to develop it even more.’

I had many different thoughts, but what bothered me most about this situation was the expression of those around me. I was sure they were curious because even

though I looked like an ordinary person, I actually had something worth displaying at the museum. I had no choice but to speak out quickly.

“I decline.”

- I apologize if it was sudden, but…

The boy didn’t know exactly what I had. He was talking nonsense, but I wasn’t planning on letting him look into my eyes. He must have realized that I was wary of him because he turned his head away in disappointment.

- Although you’re a bit inferior compared to the three I mentioned earlier, you’re still a human blessed by mana. And you…

This time, he pointed at Jung Ha-Yan and Park Yeon-Joo.

‘She definitely has something as well.’

Park Yeon-Joo was probably able to maintain her position as the guild master because she was hiding something, but when I checked with Mind’s Eye, I remember seeing nothing out of the ordinary. Now that I thought about it, her title was pretty unique so it was probably related to that.

- It’s a very joyful day. I can’t let important visitors like you be treated like this. Yes, definitely not. If you don’t mind, I’d like to guide you myself. Is that okay?

I wanted to make that request to him and it was a relief that we understood each other’s intentions. Obviously, accepting offers like this was the right thing to do.

‘We have to obtain as many benefits as we can.’

I had to think about whether this boy was capable of backstabbing us or not.

CHAPTER 234
A MYTHICAL BEING (1)

- Our museum carries many different objects. We have objects you call items, and like I showed you earlier, the museum also has items with historical value. Of course, we don't just carry weapons and equipment.

"…"

- Sealed and contracted beings also exist. They exist so that you can explore the museum yourselves. Obviously, there are beings from other dimensions as well. The beings that arrived here through a rift require the utmost care since they can harm this dimension.

"…"

- There have been many sacrifices and fights. The Rift Guardians succeeded in sealing the rift by laying down everything they had, but even after that, they had always been worried about unknown threats. Because of that, they said we should always be aware of the rift. That's the reason why the majority of the museum exploration reward is made up of weapons, which you call treasures.

"I see," I commented.

- Of course, with great power comes great responsibility. That's probably the reason why the guardians only rewarded those who completed the exploration.

'I think I know what happened… '

I wasn't sure when it happened, but a rift opened on this continent before, and terrifying creatures started to fall out of that rift. The Rift Guardians had put their lives on the line to stop the threat, and they succeeded in sealing the rift in the end. I was certain the guardians were saying to be aware of those threats. That was why they created…

'The Rift Museum.'

I was sure they didn't create it with bad intentions.

'I think it changed a bit, though.'

I wasn't sure why the named monsters and rewards were given randomly, but I didn't care about the creator's intentions. It was probably because we had no idea when or what kind of threat would come our way. Max continued to talk as if he was confirming that I was correct.

- All rewards and tests are decided randomly. I don't completely understand the intentions of the Rift Guardians, but there are different types of threats, so that's probably the reason for the randomized tests and rewards.

I did think about focusing on what the boy was saying, but the items around us caught my attention.

[Doom Beast's Gauntlet - Legendary Rank]

[This gauntlet belonged to the Doom Beast who entered through the rift. As the weapon used by the legendary Beastmaster of the past, in addition to increasing the user's affinity with all beasts, it also has the ability to communicate with the spirits of animals. The master can summon the three legendary-ranked beasts inside the gauntlet. Those beasts are lifelong friends of the legendary Beastmaster. Omitted…]

'Huh… '

There was more.

[Frost Greatsword - Legendary Rank]

[This is the cursed ice greatsword used by the Corrupted King. There are no other details other than the fact that it can control the dead. The information has been sealed so tightly that Mind's Eye is unable to see it.]

'Control the dead?'

With this one sword, the wielder could become a necromancer. The Doom Beast's Gauntlet allowed the owner to control three legendary-ranked beasts and it was so absurd I didn't know what to say. Of course, Juliena was also a legendary-ranked weapon, but since her consciousness was still asleep, I couldn't help but think that she was a bit inferior compared to the Doom Beast's Gauntlet.

Buzz…

I heard a vibrating noise, so I stroked the handle of the sword before looking around once again.

- As expected, all of you are interested in the weapons. There are weapons that are too dangerous to wield and there are a few weapons some people are not qualified to wield in the first place. *Oh*, do you see this?

[Hammer of God - Mythic Rank]

[The power of the five giants is asleep in this hammer. The power of the Volcanic God of Light, Goddess of the Forest, King of the Waves, King of the Wind, and the Heart of the Queen is asleep here. You can use the five elements… Omitted.]

'Huh… this weapon… '

The hammer looked too heavy to even carry with both hands, but just by looking at it, I could feel an enormous amount of power. It felt like it was powerful enough to make an ordinary person become a top-ranked player just by wielding it.

- This is one of the weapons that fell from the rift. If I had to give it a rank, I guess it would be a mythic-ranked weapon. Would you believe me if I told you that the power of the five giants is asleep in this hammer? At that time, I remember how the Rift Guardians were doing their best to seal the power of the giants running wild within the hammer. Each weapon has their own value, but out of the weapons you call

items, I can confidently say that this is the best.

Max looked confident about the collection, and I wasn't the only one staring at the hammer. They weren't staring because they had Mind's Eye and were able to see the item's stats. There were things you could feel even without seeing it, and anyone could tell that this weapon wasn't from this continent.

'Shit… '

The interesting part was the simple description written below the item.

'I guess the Rift Guardians couldn't figure out the item's true identity.'

I was sure they tested, investigated, and checked the weapon themselves, but not even half of the information I found out through my attribute was written. I was even more convinced of how great Mind's Eye was.

Anyway, the expedition members looked at Max with awe, and I felt that it made him a bit arrogant.

- Of course, there are two other mythic-ranked weapons, but this is one of the weapons I am proudest of.

"Is this one of the items we can receive as a gift?" I asked.

- No. This item will not be given as a reward. Unfortunately, the Rift Guardians said that this is one of the items not included in the reward, but the remaining two mythic-ranked items will be given randomly at the same rate.

"*Ah*…"

The chance of getting it was 1 to 500. If Kim Hyun-Sung obtained a weapon like that, I was sure he would start dancing on the spot. The fact that he still hadn't obtained a legendary-ranked item was heartbreaking, so I was sure he would be more than satisfied if he obtained a legendary-ranked item. If I calculated the rate with the legendary-ranked items included, the chance of him obtaining a legendary-ranked item would be 30 to 500. The probability wasn't bad. Getting a mythic-ranked item would be the best, but it wouldn't be bad to get a legendary-ranked item. However, I didn't even want to think about getting anything lower than that.

‘I can’t let that happen.’

- Like I mentioned before, if you want to obtain a reasonable reward, you need to complete the museum exploration. Shall we move to a different area?

“Sure.”

This was the important part since we could obtain the items through rewards. Survival was our top priority, so knowing our opponent was more important than the kind of reward we would get.

After walking for a while, we arrived at a place that had a completely different atmosphere from before. Unlike the items that had been displayed in a fancy room, I saw creatures that looked as if they were sealed. There were large monsters to very small monsters. They had either been sealed by the Rift Guardians or they had been collected over time. As soon as we entered, I obviously looked around using Mind’s Eye and filled my head with information.

‘I need to gather data.’

Regardless of what kind of monsters they were, we had to face a total of three named monsters for the exploration. Since we had no information about them, it was best to be prepared in advance. I excluded the epic-ranked monsters for now and quickly focused on the thirty legendary-ranked monsters and the three mythic-ranked monsters…

[Due to the difference in class, Mind’s Eye cannot be used on this target.]

‘What the hell?’

There was a green-skinned monster sitting on a chair made of weapons. It had large horns and a large tail and there were seven types of weapons floating around it. Not only did I get goosebumps just from looking at it, but my body started to tremble as well.

‘How are we… supposed to beat this?’

Our levels were completely different and there wasn't a word that could describe this feeling. Telling us to fight something like this was completely ridiculous, and even if Kim Hyun-Sung rushed toward the monster repeatedly, the green monster would still win. When I unknowingly looked at him, I noticed him glaring at the green monster quietly.

'Has he seen that monster before?'

Rather than fear, there was a difficult-to-describe expression on his face. If Kim Hyun-Sung had entered this dungeon in his past life and he ended up facing this monster, then I understood why he had said this dungeon expedition was dangerous.

That was when I heard Park Deok-Gu's voice.

"What's with this monster? Wow… it looks pretty cool."

"D-Don't provoke it, you pig!" I exclaimed.

I shouted unknowingly. I was worried that the green monster was going to jump out of its seat.

- *Ah*, so you've realized it, but no need to worry. Nothing will happen even if you just touch it. Moreover, the monster before you is a dummy.

"A dummy?" I asked.

- Yes, it's a well-made replica. To be honest, even the Rift Guardians had a difficult time completely sealing monsters like this, and I also heard that it's a mythic-ranked being that has been sitting there even before I was born. *Oh*, if you want to see other mythic-ranked beings, I'll show them to you. One remained here because of their long contract with the Rift Guardians, and the other, *hm*… it's difficult to explain. It'll be better if you see them for yourselves.

Basically, there were two more monsters like this one.

'Shit… '

I underestimated this dungeon.

'Shit… '

I finally understood why Kim Hyun-Sung had said it was dangerous. There were three mythic-ranked monsters out of 500, and we had to avoid them no matter what. No matter how much we struggled, we wouldn't be able to defeat a mythic-ranked being with our current power. We might have a chance if we had to go up against a legendary-ranked named raid monster, but fighting against *that* type of monster was impossible. Between fighting and running, running was the smarter choice.

Max seemed like he didn't care about our thoughts, as he was so focused on showing off the Rift Guardians' collection.

- You might be more familiar with this one. The Fragment of the Ancient Continental God. You may not know it, but the dragon here with us…

"I've heard of it from the lord when I was young. I heard it was sealed somewhere, and I guess that somewhere is here. Can this be controlled?" Dialugia asked.

- Yes because the fragment doesn't have a consciousness. Its power has weakened due to the guardians' seal. If you end up fighting against this creature, it'll be unsealed for a certain amount of time.

Tentacles were attached to the monster's large eyes. Like the monster before, I couldn't view its information with Mind's Eye. It was better than the previous monster, but if this were unsealed, then we would be wiped out. I didn't even have to run a simulation in my head to know what would happen. The vanguards would fall because they wouldn't be able to withstand a single tentacle sweep and the rearguards would start looking for their parents amidst the confusion.

'No way… '

It wasn't about being able to do it or not. We had to do everything within our power to prevent a mythic-ranked monster from spawning.

'It'll be fine; it'll be fine… '

It wouldn't spawn. The chance was less than one percent and the expedition's average luck stat was over 60. You would have to be *really* unlucky to fight against a mythic-ranked monster, so the majority of the Explorers had probably fought against epic-ranked named monsters.

Naturally, everyone's expression turned serious the more they heard the boy's

explanation, and that was when the boy suddenly said.

- *Oh*, it's time.

"Time?" I asked.

- Yes. It has been a while since I talked with high-ranking people that I actually forgot much time had passed. In a few hours, the seals will naturally break. *Ah*, actually, it has already started.

Once again, the floor rattled and the structure of the location we were in started to change. Those on display went into the ground, and an open space suitable for battle started to form.

I started to get nervous.

- Please look here for a moment. Even though it's selected randomly, the guardians created a spinning wheel so that you can easily adapt.

'…'

- If you insert your mana while spinning this sign, the monster you'll be fighting will be selected randomly. Please select someone to spin the wheel.

"Got it," I said.

'What's with this spinning wheel? Shit… '

It was a bit surprising, but this was already written in the report.

We had already decided on who was going to spin the wheel. The first person was Park Yeon-Joo since her luck stat was high. She grabbed the wheel with a slightly nervous expression, and everyone looked at her anxiously.

'Please… '

Just avoid mythic-ranked…

'Please… '

We would probably have to fight hard against a legendary-ranked monster, but fighting against three legendary-ranked monsters was better than fighting a single mythic-ranked monster.

[The wheel is spinning.]

At the voice's announcement, the large wheel started to spin while rattling noisily.

"Please…!"

At this moment, I was sure everyone's mind and goal had become one.

CHAPTER 235
A MYTHICAL BEING (2)

It was funny how we looked like a mob of meerkats when all thirty of us were looking at one place, but the situation wasn't funny at all because our fate depended on that spinning wheel. The wheel continued to spin fiercely as it continued to receive mana.

'Based on probability… '

The chance of a mythic-ranked monster appearing was significantly low. A 500 to 3 chance, and the chance of us fighting a legendary-ranked monster was low as well. It would be ideal if we got an epic-ranked named monster, but we should be able to handle a legendary-ranked monster.

'It'll depend on the type of monster, though… '

The expedition members' stats were strong enough to take on a legendary-ranked named monster. However, the story would be different if the legendary-ranked monster was on the brink of ascending to the next rank, but I was sure we would be able to handle the majority of the monsters.

I heard someone gulping, and it was because the spinning wheel was starting to slow down. After some time, the wheel slowed down to the point that we could clearly see it, and every time it passed by the words 'mythic-rank' colored in white. I felt relieved. It was the same for 'legendary-rank' colored in gold.

"J-Just a little more!"

Park Deok-Gu started to shout, and the members of the Black Swan Guild quietly cheered for the same thing. As the wheel slowed down, the needle landed on the gold-colored space, and everyone expressed their disappointment because the space next to it was purple.

"*Ah*…"

'This is fine.'

We could handle this much.

'Great, we did it. This is good enough.'

[The spinning wheel has stopped.]

[The legendary-ranked named monster, Skeleton Knight Baan, has been selected.]

- Skeleton Knight Baan was selected. I remember its existence on this continent, and it possessed the soul of a hero.

The boy was explaining the monster's existence to us, but I didn't bother to listen because I could see all of its information with Mind's Eye. I didn't care about the skeleton knight's story or how they ended up here because the most important question was whether we could capture this dungeon or not.

'A close-range type monster that can use unique magic spells.'

Its unique spells were Energy Drain and Skeleton Summon. I had an idea about the second spell, but there wasn't any information on how the monster would activate the first spell, so when I looked at the sub-menu again, I saw more detailed information.

'Magic circle on the ground… '

Obviously, it was a pattern we shouldn't step on.

I didn't know what the knight looked like when they were still human, but they had a pretty large frame compared to ordinary people. They seemed about two meters tall, and they looked more like a mercenary than a knight.

I didn't see this information through Mind's Eye, but I had a feeling that Skeleton Knight Baan wasn't a high-tier monster on the brink of ranking up. It was probably a low to mid legendary-ranked monster, and I was certain we could defeat it. Based on

its appearance, it definitely gave off the vibe of a legendary-ranked monster. The knight didn't look like a skeleton that would just break apart with one attack. In addition to the green light between its eyes and how its bones were shining, the weapon in its hands emitted a quite ominous energy as well.

If I were alone, I would already be running with all my might. However, I wasn't alone right now, and we had a pretty clear plan on how we were going to capture the dungeon…

'Do we just need to dodge its Energy Drain?'

The key point was to avoid the magic circles on the ground, and the vanguards would take care of the annoying adds[1]. Telling Jung Ha-Yan separately was the best option, so when I spoke cautiously, she quietly came close to me.

"Ha-Yan."

"Yes, Oppa?"

"Prepare the floating spell for everyone," I ordered.

"*Ah!* Okay…" she replied.

"I'll give you a signal when to activate it. Make sure you're always triple casting, and the floating spell should always be the last one to be activated. Prepare it so that we can move as soon as I give you the signal," I informed her.

"Okay. And i-if I… decrease my firepower a bit, I-I can cast up to four times," she said.

"Then do that," I told her.

'This girl… '

I guess it wasn't a lie when the museum manager said that Jung Ha-Yan was blessed by mana. Even if your affinity with magic was good, quadruple casting still wasn't an easy thing to do. It was a matter of whether you could cast four different spells or not.

'Genius.'

Naturally, casting several spells at once would decrease the caster's firepower, which was a flaw, but since we still had to figure out the monster's patterns, I thought it wouldn't be so bad to test the waters using weak spells.

Some time had already passed, and even though Max, the manager, was still explaining about the monster, the skeleton knight looked as if it was already prepared to fight. Max had to have noticed that, as he continued to talk while nodding.

- Seems like I talked too much. I guess I've been making you and Baan wait for the fight. Now, then! Good luck, Museum Explorers.

"Let's get ready."

Kim Hyun-Sung quietly gave an order, and everyone started to prepare on their own. After Max ended his explanation, the skeleton knight slowly held up its sword, and when we heard a *whoosh* sound from the large great sword, a *boom* followed along with the sound of the wind being violently blown.

'Can it do long-range attacks as well?'

It was probably a type of spell that sent out magic, but I wasn't sure. Naturally, a manual that contained those types of attacks was already in my head.

Holy magic started to pour on the vanguards with shields, and the tanks were blocking from the front. The mages were casting their spells and excluding Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo, the vanguard was on standby.

"Nice."

They were trying to grasp the monster's pattern without waiting for orders.

'This is why experienced people are wanted.'

Everyone here was experienced, and they were all making plans on how they should move.

"*Grrr… grrr…*"

The moment the skeleton knight raised its hand, skeleton soldiers started to pop up

from the ground, so I had to say something.

“Deok-Gu, Mr. Hyun-Sung, and Miss Yeon-Joo will be the key players. The remaining vanguards should create a wall with their bodies and take care of the soldiers first. Please pull the named monster to the right. Until the next soldier approaches, those with ranged jobs should continue to attack the named monster and when the soldiers approach again, take care of the soldiers first. I’ll send a signal if the pattern changes. For defense mages, maintain the shield spells that’ll block the long-ranged attack you saw just now.”

“Got it!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

No one else replied, but I was sure they understood because Kim Hyun-Sung, Park Yeon-Joo, and Park Deok-Gu rushed toward the named monster. Once those three started, the aggro would be on them. The skeleton knight was smart, so I was sure it wanted to take care of the rearguards first, but since the vanguards would keep on attacking it, it wouldn’t be able to do anything. It meant that the skeleton knight would have no choice but to rely on its summoned soldiers.

‘It’ll probably expect that the adds will be able to take care of us… ’

Jung Ha-Yan’s first spell instantly activated.

“…!”

‘How fast!’

A spell shot out along with an unknown sound. Large balls of flame incomparable to mine simultaneously started to fall.

Booooooom!

The summoned group of skeletons was destroyed as the spell unleashed a loud explosion. I assumed the skeleton soldiers were going to be defeated quite easily, but I guess they weren’t as weak as I thought.

A semi-transparent defense spell started to spread between the enemy and us.

‘I wonder if there’s a skeleton mage, or maybe they’re being summoned by their jobs.’

I once again realized that there was a reason why it was a legendary-ranked monster. The skeleton archers were drawing their bows, and our side was creating a shield. The mages on both sides were casting their spells. When it felt like the battle was lasting a long time, I immediately took out a Dragon Breath Potion from my pocket and inserted my mana into it.

Buuuuuuzz!

Along with that sound, the potion left my hand. When it exploded, the potion started melting the enemy's shield. As if this was our chance, the spells from the mages on our side started to fall on them.

'Nice.'

The vanguards were doing well at blocking the adds approaching us. There was no way that there would be a twist in this situation. The fact that the rearguard was safe was proof that the dungeon raid was going well.

'You're wasting your energy by summoning soldiers.'

If the skeleton knight was actually summoning them based on their jobs, then our team could save more mana. The skeleton knight's fighting style and patterns had finally become obvious to us based on how it was fighting all this time. Firstly, it used Energy Drain to drain mana that it could use from us, and then it used Skeleton Summon to constantly summon skeletons. The skeleton knight was also a sorcerer powerful enough to block Kim Hyun-Sung, Park Deok-Gu, and Park Yeon-Joo's joint attack.

We would have struggled if he had no idea how to conquer this dungeon. Assuming that the Energy Drain dealt a lot of damage, the expedition members who could have previously fought against it may have started calling for their parents after the first drain, which could have turned the situation into quite a chaotic one.

"I want the main mages to focus their firepower on the named monster. The vanguards will take care of the remaining soldiers, and party three's mages will continue to maintain the shield spell. When the second wave of summon appears, the vanguards should create a wall again," I ordered.

"Got it."

“The second summon has begun. It has begun! Focus your firepower on the soldiers first. I want the priests to focus on Deok-Gu,” I said.

It was surprising that Park Deok-Gu was doing better than I thought. I was certain it would have been difficult for him to endure all this if it wasn’t for the priests, Kim Hyun-Sung, and Park Yeon-Joo, but he was calmly blocking the skeleton knight’s attack.

‘Good job, you pig!’

I couldn’t help but think that helping him had been worth it.

“Focus your attacks on the named monster again. Wait, the third summon has started. It’s a large army. There are 30 mage groups, so I want the archers to attack the mages first,” I commanded.

“Okay…”

I spoke while sending out Juliena.

Some of us had gotten injured because it was impossible to avoid every arrow or blade in a battle like this. However, I was kind of annoyed because…

“Vanguards, I know it’s difficult, but try your best not to get hurt. I think the named monster is recovering its mana through the wounds inflicted by the soldiers. It’s a small amount, but please be careful,” I warned.

“All right…”

It was a small amount, but the skeletons the skeleton knight had summoned possessed the Energy Drain skill. The fact that the skeleton knight had summoned a large number of skeletons during the third wave was proof that it felt pressured. It was about time.

As expected, the named skeleton knight raised one of its hands high, and the moment it lowered its hand, I quickly shouted.

“Jung Ha-Yan!”

“Float together!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

After shouting a cute incantation, the bodies of the thirty party members started to rise into the air. After checking the ground, I felt relieved about casting the floating spell ahead of time.

'It's a magic circle we couldn't have dodged.'

It wasn't a type of magic circle created at the target's location. The floor we had been fighting on was the entire area of the magic circle, so the sky was basically the only place we could escape to.

'This is cheating… '

Even if one's agility stat was high, it was impossible not to touch the ground.

This skeleton knight was definitely powerful enough to be a legendary-ranked monster. The unique skills the monster possessed were *definitely* not balanced, and it was to the point that it could be categorized as above standard. However…

'Mind's Eye is much more powerful, you skeleton bastard!'

The skeleton knight seemed insignificant now that Kim Hyun-Sung was beating it up.

'Let's get our reward, Hyun-Sung!'

---

1. Adds are additional enemy usually summoned by the boss. You can think of them as the boss's reinforcement. ☜

CHAPTER 236
A MYTHICAL BEING (3)

'That was easy.'

It had never been easy to defeat a named monster without suffering any injuries, even if that named monster's rank was low. The skeleton knight was supposed to last longer, as even though we were able to deal with the second wave of summons, we couldn't avoid the Energy Drain from the first summon. If Jung Ha-Yan hadn't activated her floating spell, then things would have been bad for us. In a nutshell, knowledge was power.

The skeleton knight that used a lot of its mana with the first drain in mind was defeated as Kim Hyun-Sung bashed its head in. The way Kim Hyun-Sung fought during this fight was shocking, but the way Skeleton Knight Baan was defeated wasn't how I expected a legendary-ranked monster would die.

Anyway, the expedition party managed to defeat the monster without any major sacrifices, and we obtained another chance to fight the next monster. Obviously, I was looking forward to the small event after the battle, and I was sure the Black Swan Guild was also looking forward to this moment since their members were trapped here.

- You people are strong.

"…"

- Baan's defeat was a matter of course, as you people are powerful, but I never imagined Baan would be defeated so easily. I'm sure the guardians will be really happy if they see you.

'All right, just give us the reward already.'

I was sure everyone had the same thought, but they just couldn't say it out loud.

- As I explained before, a reward will be given during the expedition. One of the items

displayed in the museum will be randomly presented as a gift. It'll be the same as before. You can spin for all three rewards after you have completed the entire expedition—

"We'll start right now," I interrupted.

It was dumb to wait. It would be a different story if out of the 500 items, we received an item that would hinder our expedition or if we obtained a difficult-to-control cursed item. Fortunately, the chance of obtaining those kinds of weapons was lower than us obtaining a legendary or mythic item. The expedition was going along very smoothly, but we had to gamble. Even if we *did* obtain a cursed item, we would still be able to handle a legendary-ranked monster. However…

'We'll be annihilated if a mythic-ranked monster is selected.'

The only way we could have a chance at defeating a mythic-ranked monster was…

'Equipment.'

It was to equip our party with mythic-ranked items. Kim Hyun-Sung didn't use hammers, but we would have a chance if we had the hammer we saw earlier. Obviously, one item alone wouldn't change everything, but if the regressor's underleveled equipment was upgraded…

'General Kim Hyun-Sung will do everything.'

He would make a breakthrough somehow.

'He has to get an item no matter what.'

Only then would the party be safe…

- As you have seen before, items that can hinder your expedition can appear as well.

"It's fine…" I replied.

I wasn't sure whether Max had said it because he was worried or if he simply didn't want us to take the items displayed in the museum, but I saw him nodding.

- If that's what you want, then alright. Just like earlier, I'll need one person to come

up and spin the wheel.

“Okay.”

Excluding Park Yeon-Joo, the only people with high luck stat were Dialugia, Jung Ha-Yan, and me.

‘I can't let Dialugia do it.’

It could be a problem since her luck stat was too high. It would be absurd if an item like the parenting set came out, but it would be dangerous if Jung Ha-Yan or I spun the wheel because an unimaginable item for stalking could get selected if Jung Ha-Yan did it.

‘Kim Hyun-Sung’s stat isn’t bad.’

His luck stat wasn’t high but it was decent and he was desperate for a weapon more than anyone else here… If his luck stat helped him in a situation like this, then it might compensate him for the reward he had lost out on.

“I think it’ll be best if Mr. Hyun-Sung did it this time. Unless there’s someone here who disagrees,” I suggested.

“That’s fine with me.”

“Spin it, Mr. Hyun-Sung.”

“No, it should be someone with a higher luck stat than me…” he said.

“You should spin it, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I told him.

When I spoke with a firm voice, he nodded and walked toward the wheel. After releasing a short sigh, he spun the wheel, and once again, everyone focused on it.

“Please…”

It would be nice if a mythic-ranked weapon was selected because we would be able to safely proceed with the remaining two battles. Kim Hyun-Sung also looked desperate. I was sure there was a weapon he had his eyes on, but we had been so busy that he hadn’t had the chance to walk around on his own. He had always been

sad about not being to wield a legendary-ranked weapon after I took Juliena away from him, and it felt like that sadness had always been written on his face. I was sure he would be satisfied with a legendary-ranked weapon, but what he needed wasn't a legendary-ranked item.

'It's mythic, Hyun-Sung!'

If a legendary-ranked item was selected, then it had to be one on the brink of ascending to the next rank. If possible, the Frost Greatsword would be nice. It would be best to get a weapon that even I couldn't read with Mind's Eye.

[The wheel is spinning]

'Please.'

[A rare-ranked weapon, Archmage Isaac's Magic Sword, has been selected.]

"What?"

- This is one of the weapons that entered here through the rift. It's a low-ranked weapon, but it's a valuable item…

'That's not what I'm asking, you bastard.'

I wasn't the only one who remained quiet at this absurd situation, as everyone looked at the magic sword that popped up with confusion. We passed the test pretty easily, but the process itself hadn't been easy at all. The skeleton knight was definitely a legendary-ranked monster, and the expedition party worked hard to win the battle. The reward was so ridiculous I wanted to laugh.

Kim Hyun-Sung stared at the result he had gotten from spinning the wheel. There were less than 10 rare-ranked items here, so in some ways, the chance of getting a rare-ranked item was lower than getting a legendary-ranked item. He had basically proven that he was unlucky. He had to be disappointed because he clenched his fist, but he didn't throw the sword or start cursing. He simply looked down at the sword in silence.

“I’m sorry,” Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

“No, don’t be sorry. There’s no guarantee that the result will be different if someone else had spun the wheel. I’m sure we’ll get a better weapon on the next one,” I assured him.

“Alright…”

“Don’t be so disappointed,” I comforted.

“He’s right, Mr. Hyun-Sung. Having a high luck stat doesn’t guarantee that you’ll have good luck in draws like this and considering the fact that I picked a legendary-ranked named monster earlier, our luck stat may not apply to draws like this…” Park Yeon-Joo chimed in.

That could be the case, but it would be nice if it was true. Having high luck stats didn’t mean you were born lucky. Of course, I had no idea what would happen if one’s luck stat went over 100 points, but I saw a few people in the slums with ridiculous luck stats. When I thought about how Kasugano Yuno had zero points in luck, I naturally thought about how I had to do more research on the stat itself.

However, if our chances would increase even slightly based on our luck stat, then it was better to bet on that.

Kim Hyun-Sung was just unlucky this time, but what bothered me more than this was…

‘Is it really random?’

It was whether all the draws in this dungeon were random. Actually, before thinking about that, Max’s attitude was a problem as well. He was obviously proud of this museum. It was clear why the Rift Guardians had created this place and why Max looked up to his creator, the Rift Guardians. I understood just how attached he was to this place when he started to explain the displayed items. The boy wanted to continue to take care of the museum, and even though he had said it was the will of the Rift Guardians, I was sure he wouldn’t let a valuable item be taken away from this place if he was an intelligent being.

Max wasn’t a *perfect* intellectual being, but he was close to an intellectual being. The fact that he started chattering away when the special guests arrived was a sign that

he was an intellectual being. Even now, the boy looked as if he was relieved. He may look indifferent to other people, but since my eyes were different from others, I could sense a strange emotion from him.

'Even though he's pretending to be a machine… '

He was a type of intellectual being, and I even thought about the possibility of him being the dungeon's hidden named monster…

'I don't think he is… '

This Rift Museum was being taken care of by a system, not the boy, and even though that system was created by the Rift Guardians, a transcendent being currently managing this entire continent had to be managing that system as well.

If I could ruin all of this, then I would have slipped out of this place after snatching a mythic-ranked item and ignoring the museum expedition the boy was in charge of. It was the same as the tutorial dungeon. We could leave after completing the quest, and the important thing was…

'How much authority does the manager have over the system?'

Was Max able to manipulate the odds? No matter how hard I thought about it, I wouldn't get an answer. I was certain that his main job was to take care of the items displayed here. When he showed the parenting set earlier, he probably had the ability to take out the items, but that was probably all he could do.

These various thoughts were giving me a headache and unlike me, who had a lot to think about, Max was still chattering about different things, but it was mostly about the sword Kim Hyun-Sung had just received. The boy looked disappointed because even though it was just a rare-ranked item, it had been difficult to acquire it.

- I'm kind of sad about having to give away an item I have grown so fond of. Even though its rank is low, it's one of the items that had been displayed in our museum for a long time… But there's nothing I can do about it…

"I see…"

It was impossible for a manager to resist the system.

“I have a question, Max,” I said.

- Yes?

“How much authority do you have in this museum?”

- I don’t quite understand what you’re asking, but I’m just a manager who manages the system here, and I don’t really have the power to do anything.

I couldn’t deduce whether he was speaking the truth or not, but I believed that he was telling the truth. If he were the dungeon boss, then he wouldn’t have treated us like this in the first place.

“Got it.”

- After having many conversations, it’s now that time again. It’s the next part. Once you complete the second part, I’ll give you enough time to look around the museum, so please hang in there.

“Then the next part…”

“I’ll spin it,” I volunteered.

“*Oh*, right. Your luck stat is high as well.”

At this point, I didn’t think it would be bad for me to spin it since we would be able to relax a bit once we were done with the second part of the test. I had no idea just how much time Max was going to give us to relax, but I wanted to use that time to gather more information about the museum.

‘I need more… ’

Escaping from the dungeon’s basic system is impossible, but there may be another way.

‘Epic rank.’

Since Park Yeon-Joo had picked a legendary-ranked named monster, the next monster had to be an epic rank! Since Kim Hyun-Sung had shown his bad luck in the last spin, I felt less burdened.

[The wheel is spinning]

When I used my mana, the wheel started to spin violently. I couldn't help but hope that it would land in the purple section, which was epic rank, or the blue section, which was rare rank.

'It's fine.'

I had never once thought that my luck had become worse after coming here. Everything was on track, and even though we had experienced some dangerous situations, the human named Lee Ki-Young was born with a lot of luck overall. However, that expectation was shattered in an instant because when the wheel slowed down, the location the needle was going to land on was making me anxious.

"W-Wait, time out."

[The wheel is spinning.]

"W-Wait!"

[The wheel is spinning.]

"Please stop. Shit…"

[The wheel is spinning.]

"*Ah*."

[The wheel has stopped.]

[The mythic-ranked monster, Fragment of the Ancient God, has been selected.]

“…”

“…”

“…”

A heavy silence descended upon the room. I had to do something about this situation, so I unknowingly started shouting.

“I-It’s rigged!”

CHAPTER 237
A MYTHICAL BEING (4)

"I-It's rigged!"

It could simply be bad luck. Coincidentally, it was kind of suspicious how the chances were bad when I spun the same wheel Kim Hyun-Sung had spun, but probability-wise, it wasn't impossible. It could be that I was just unlucky, but I had to do something to stop the mythic-ranked monster from appearing.

'No way.'

As it made a rattling sound, the Fragment of the Ancient God was trying to appear before us. I wasn't sure if it was taking its time to break the seal or if Max was delaying it because of my complaint, but once that monster appeared, our party would get annihilated within ten minutes.

"The rates are rigged!" I shouted again.

I didn't even know what I was saying, and the unknown fear I had never felt before made me tremble. However, Max seemed interested in what I had to say because if he really looked up to the Rift Guardians, then he would be bothered by anyone insulting this museum.

- I understand what you're trying to say. The rates are not rigged. Everyone has a 1 to 500 chance.

"There's no way for us to know if that's actually true or not. Don't you agree?" Ahn Ki-Mo asked.

'Nice, Ahn Ki-Mo.'

I thought he could be useful in situations like this, but I had never imagined that we would be in sync this quickly.

'Good one.'

While Ahn Ki-Mo was arguing with Max, my job was pretty simple.

'Think of a way to escape.'

Fighting a mythic-ranked monster wasn't even an option. The difference between classes was so big that fighting the monster was impossible, and if I had to give an example, it was like fighting a tank with a slingshot. Even if Kim Hyun-Sung had some skills up his sleeve, there was no way we could defeat it.

'I need to play along for now.'

After Ahn Ki-Mo finished his line, he glanced at me, so I had no choice but to speak up.

"Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo is correct. You said that the rates aren't rigged, but you don't have any proof to back that up."

- Is there a reason for me to prove it?

"Of course. You call this place a museum instead of a dungeon, and you called us explorers, not capturers. If this museum was a dungeon, then there's no reason for you to explain it to us, but if this museum *really* was created by the Rift Guardians, then it's your duty to explain it to us. It's not a choice," I explained.

- A duty and not a choice… That's an interesting point.

"As the manager, it may be fun for you, but to the explorers, it's an important matter. We're not here to capture the dungeon. We came to experience and explore the museum. Don't you all agree?" I asked.

"Yes, he's right."

Ahn Ki-Mo was the only one who answered, but I could feel the rest of the members slowly getting ready to move. I was sure everyone had the same thought as me. It wasn't because I was smarter than the others that I spoke up first. I just doubted it before anyone else did, and I was sure that doubt was now growing inside everybody.

- I understand your point of view. To me, it seems like you're just doing this to prevent the exploration from progressing further… However, it has been a while

since I had guests, so I guess I should provide an explanation, even though I'm not sure how I should explain it. Would it be convincing if I quantified the results of the explorers who had visited the museum so far?

Max was more quick-witted than I thought, and he seemed kind of annoyed, but his expression wasn't strange. The Rift Museum he loved so much was about to turn into a dirty gambling house where games were rigged, so I was sure he would want to address that first.

People would interpret things differently when expressing the same information in different ways. We may think of this place as a dungeon, but Max didn't think the same. To him, the museum was a gift and duty the Rift Guardians had created for the humans on this continent, and it was a place where countless historical records were stored.

"I'm curious about whether you have proof that you haven't rigged the quantified data. Where's your body in the first place? It's a dummy that's guiding us, not you. If you really are the manager instead of the owner of this museum…"

'Not like this.'

Despite saying it, I thought about how maybe I shouldn't have said it.

'All I'm doing is delaying the battle.'

It had already been confirmed that the boy wasn't the dungeon master. The strategy told by the Rift Museum's system was to explore the museum instead of killing The Museum Manager Max. Even if the boy died, it didn't mean we had captured the dungeon, and resisting the system's power with the power of ordinary humans was impossible. If resisting were an option, then players would have already destroyed the dungeon from the outside first before starting the dungeon capture. Even the Cursed Shrine, the place where I met Juliena, could be stabilized after attacking the dungeon from the outside with magic. This method was much safer than entering the dungeon. Basically, there was only one way to capture this dungeon.

'Follow the rules.'

If resisting the system was impossible, then that was the only way.

'Shit.'

Obviously, I didn't want to die in a place like this.

Max was showing proof by showing the results that hadn't been quantified, but it had been a while since I stopped listening to him. I didn't even have the luxury to answer him. Actually, Park Deok-Gu seemed more worked up than I, as he was huffing while shouting, and Ahn Ki-Mo was supporting him by playing along.

"As hyung-nim mentioned earlier, there's no proof that this is real! It was kind of strange from the start! As soon as you saw them, you said some strange things about displaying our hyung-nim and the bro. Your intentions seem a bit strange."

"He's right!" Ahn Ki-Mo shouted.

"It would be different if you didn't say that in the beginning! I don't know much about distorted causality or being blessed by mana, but how can we trust the dungeon manager when he says things like displaying people in the museum?!" Park Deok-Gu continued.

'You're doing great, you pig.'

I thought about it before, but Park Deok-Gu had the qualities of an agitator, and the tone of his voice made me nod for some reason.

- That's the rule. As the manager, I can't say that I'm not greedy for rare objects, but the rates aren't rigged.

"It's over the moment you said you were greedy. If you really had the qualities of a manager, you shouldn't have said those things in the first place! I don't know what the Rift Guardians are, but the manager they created wants to display the people of this continent, and that itself sounds *really* weird!" he added.

- That's a very human way of thinking. It's not you who makes the continent. Actually, humans are more like cancer on this continent.

I understood what he was saying because I had heard someone say that back on Earth. I guess humans weren't the only ones the Rift Guardians were protecting. I was sure the continent itself was what they were worried about, and the continent was what they were protecting.

"Is that the Rift Guardians' way of thinking? In that case, why are they testing

humans and giving weapons that humans use as rewards? Maybe it's you who thinks that humans are cancer, not the Rift Guardians!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

- That's the words of the guardians…

"For whom was this museum created in this first place? The way I see it, you must have gotten demoted from being the manager. I'm sure the Rift Guardians regretted giving you the manager position since you don't even know what kind of fruits are growing on your own farm! Is there a reason why you wouldn't rig the rates?" he asked.

'Nice one.'

The example he gave was pretty old-fashioned, but it was *very* suitable for the current situation. I knew Park Deok-Gu had the tendency to become logical in the strangest parts whenever he got worked up, but he was doing a lot better than I thought. The others must have agreed with him because their voices were starting to get louder, but the ones who spoke up were mostly the women from Park Deok-Gu's harem.

"He's right! No matter how much I think about it, it's strange. There are only 10 rare items, but one of them got picked, and what about the mythic-ranked monster? Now that I think about it, it's also strange how the legendary-ranked monster was selected the first time."

"You're right. Good point, Mr. Deok-Gu!"

Ahn Ki-Mo also raised his voice.

"What we're having a hard time believing isn't the Rift Museum, but you—the manager!"

"That's right! I agree! Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo! That's what I'd expect for an educated man! This Max guy looks like a fraud… He's not a good manager! If our hyung-nim was the manager, I'm sure he'll do a much better job! Make hyung-nim the manager of the museum!" Park Deok-Gu suggested.

The suggestion was kind of weird, but he was buying a lot of time. It was definitely beneficial since it gave me time to think this through with Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo.

‘What should we do, Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“Fighting is not an option. We have to avoid it no matter what. We’ll have to think of another way. As of right now, making a trade with the museum manager will be the most effective way to deal with this, but I don’t think the authority that Max has is enough to stop this system,” I replied.

“*Ah*, so you brought that up to buy time.” Park Yeon-Joo spoke while nodding as if she understood.

“Fighting the monster—” Kim Hyun-Sung started.

“It’s impossible. It’ll be completely different from fighting legendary-ranked monsters. Of course, we’ll have to consider fighting it if we have no other choice, but I wouldn’t recommend it. I’m sure you—” Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

“Yes, I already know that we won’t have a chance, but I can’t think of any other way…” Park Yeon-Joo responded.

We all thought the same, and we knew that all we could do was figure out another way to go about this.

‘Making a trade with the manager would be the most ideal… ’

- No matter what you say or what your intentions are, it’s true that I’m the manager of this museum. It’s my duty to maintain and manage this place. Rigging the rates is beyond my authority, and unfortunately, there isn’t a way to stop the selection that has already been made. You’ve managed to delay the mythic-ranked monster from appearing, but that monster will still show up here.

‘I knew it.’

- The monster will be unsealed for one hour. If the fragment is unsealed for more than that, the guardians’ seal may break as well, so for this test, it’s more about enduring it than fighting it.

“You, you cheater! Shit!” Park Deok-Gu cursed.

- I’ve told you before that I’m not a fraud. I thought you were all good people, but you’re just rude guests. I finally understand why your luck is bad and why a mythic-

ranked monster was selected. The Rift Guardians don't want people like you to obtain the relics of this place!

"Bullshit!" Park Deok-Gu cursed again.

Max had to have been offended because I saw how he was trembling. When nearly 30 people got up and started criticizing him, that was probably when he started to get offended.

'Trading… '

It was impossible from the start. As expected, it was impossible for him to do anything aside from using the basic functionality of the system.

'It's not rigged as well.'

We were just *extremely* unlucky. My nails naturally went up to my mouth as I bit into them. We had no other choice, but when I saw the figure slowly appearing before us, I found myself running out of breath.

'Shit.'

There were chains binding this being, whose appearance I couldn't describe. The Fragment of the Ancient God seemed to be glaring at us. I would always have this indescribable feeling whenever I saw a being on an entirely different level. Jung Ha-Yan was also biting her lips and Kim Hyun-Sung was holding on to his sword. Dialugia looked nervous as well.

'One hour? We can't survive for that long.'

I was sure everyone felt the same, but they still held their swords and shields up to show some resistance. A ridiculous thought popped into my head. After all, no matter what we did, we were going to die anyway.

[Part of the seal that bounds the Fragment of the Ancient God has been removed.]

The moment I heard that message, I spoke in a low voice, but I was sure everyone could hear me.

“Prepare for battle.”

- Good luck.

“We’re going to break the seal completely. Attack the blue chains binding the entire fragment,” I ordered.

- Huh?

CHAPTER 238
JULIENA'S AWAKENING (1)

Everyone looked at me as if they were asking what I was talking about, and it was understandable. If a monster like that broke free, it was obvious what would happen. They were probably thinking about what would happen afterward, but this was the only way for us to survive.

'We have to destroy it.'

It was impossible for Max to break the system installed in the Rift Museum, and it was the same for us players. If you asked if there was someone who could interfere with the system, then I would say yes.

'You can do it, right?'

The Fragment of the Ancient God could do that. It could smash the exhibition hall where the mythic-ranked weapons protected by the system were stored, and it could even create an exit in the dungeon where escape was impossible unless you captured it. If things went wrong, then it would be our fault for releasing this large threat to the continent, but there was no guarantee that this guy was even bad in the first place.

'Ancient God! I believe. Shit!'

"What the…"

"I won't listen to any objections. Currently, we have the highest chance of surviving with this method," I said.

"Really?"

"Yes, really," I replied.

If the Fragment of the Ancient God was crazy, then it was only right for us to sacrifice ourselves here for the sake of the continent. If things *did* go wrong, the continent

would be covered in a sea of fire, and everything would fall apart. However…

'First, I need to survive.'

It was a typical lower middle-class way of thinking, but I couldn't help but think that way. Kim Hyun-Sung was the type who would be willing to put his life on the line for the sake of the continent, but I wasn't some great figure like him. My life was the most important for me, while the lives of those around me were *very* valuable. I had no intention of getting myself killed for the sake of others, and to be frank, the people around me were more important than the entire continent.

'Screw sacrifice.'

My way of thinking may be shitty, but I couldn't help it.

"There has to be another way…"

"There is no other way. Let's think about it after breaking the seal," I suggested.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips lightly, but he must have thought I had a plan because he nodded energetically. Obviously, I didn't have any good ideas. Basically, what that meant was that I was going to figure out the situation as we go from now on. Everything would fall apart with one wrong step, but of course, I didn't explain any of that to them.

I was bothered by Kim Hyun-Sung's sacrificial personality that I couldn't suggest and say…

'We have to survive first.'

Obviously, the expedition party wasn't the only one shocked by my suggestion. Even the Manage Max was shocked as he stared at us while we were looking at the Ancient God. Actually, he seemed to be the most shocked out of everyone. The chances of a mythic-ranked monster appearing were low, to begin with, and I was sure that there hadn't been anyone crazy enough in centuries that they would try to remove the seal completely. I was confident that we were the first ones to even attempt such a thing.

- What do you… think you're doing?

"What do you mean? We're doing this so all of us can survive. There's nothing we can

do about it. The dungeon guide is just an idiot, so there's no way a bunch of expeditioners will have a plan.

- This is dangerous. Please don't…

"*Pfft*. Your way of talking has become quite polite, Mr. Manager. If you don't like it, then stop it," I told him.

- As I have told you before, I don't have that kind of authority. A-As I mentioned before, the rates aren't rigged and… and…

"What?" I asked.

- If you believe that my words had been rude, then… I apolo—

"Where should I accept your apology? Should I accept it when I'm in heaven after I'm dead? Just shut up, you useless manager. If I die, I won't be dying alone," I said.

- D-Do you have any idea what you're doing?

"Shut up, you bastard. You think we want to do this?" I asked.

- Selfish humans. You corrupted humans! Do you really think you can break the seal the guardians put on that monster?

"Who knows? In my opinion, I think it's a lot easier than fighting the Fragment of the Ancient God with a sword… *Huh?* I wonder what the Museum Manager Max, thinks.

- Dialugia! You know, don't you? Do you really think it's okay for that monster to exist in the outside world?

"…"

He tried to bring Dialugia into it because he and I weren't seeing eye to eye, but even Dialugia looked gloomy. I didn't know much about dragons, but this boy had mentioned that they correct the balance, so it was possible she didn't want this monster to exist in the outside world as well. As expected, Dialugia tried to talk to me…

"I—"

“If you don’t want our Smartie to be made fun of for not having parents, do whatever you want, woman,” I interrupted.

Mothers were strong, and I saw Dialugia biting her lips. After seeing that, Max started yelling again and seeing him so shocked like that was amusing. It was good news that he was frustrated.

‘There’s a chance.’

I wasn’t sure how much impact the seal that the Rift Guardians had placed was going to have internally, but externally, it had to be weak.

‘We have a chance… I’m sure there’s a loophole.’

The Rift Guardians had sealed beings like this monster, and they used them to test the museum explorers. Even if they were mythical beings just like the Fragment of the Ancient God, there was no way that there weren’t any flaws when they built the system here. My thoughts were obviously just assumptions, and even if I were right, it still wouldn’t be easy to defeat that thing, but as Max had mentioned earlier, enduring the test for an hour was a lot better than fighting it.

Ordering the party first was more important.

“Ignore all the bullshit Max told us. I want Dialugia to get ready to use Breath and use spells that have the most power. If possible, once the explosion ends, I’d like Mr. Hyun-Sung and Miss Yeon-Joo to—”

“Got it.”

“I understand.”

I was basically asking them to commit suicide, but the two nodded for now. That was when we heard a familiar voice.

[3. 2. 1.]

[The battle will now start.]

We had to break it before the monster started attacking, and as expected, the Fragment of the Ancient God started running rampant as it tried to rip off the seal. Just seeing that made me shake, and fear started to fill me up, but it only took a moment for that fear to disappear.

"!!!"

The woman who looked reliable had transformed. Her overwhelming size, horns, and frame were enough to make anyone exclaim. After transforming, she started to take a deep breath, and even I thought that a ridiculous amount of mana was gathering. If the wave of that Breath reached our side, then we would receive damage, but since we had to focus all of our firepower, we couldn't afford to have anyone cast a defense spell.

'I need to block the wave.'

I would block the rogue wave by summoning a dragon's tail. That alone may not be enough, but this wasn't the time for me to worry about different things. When I inserted my mana into the half-empty Dragon's Breath Potion, I started to hear a buzzing sound. Jung Ha-Yan also started to recite her spell, and this was my first time seeing her recite a spell with sincerity. She was gathering enough mana comparable to Dialugia. Everyone looked at Jung Ha-Yan in shock. The other mages were reciting their spells, and even priests like Sun Hee-Young were reciting prayers to focus their firepower.

'It's possible.'

Dialugia's Breath would be the signal.

Craaaaaaaack!

Her body was pushed back with that sound as the emitted light gnawed at the ground and rushed toward the chains holding down the Fragment of the Ancient God. On Jung Ha-Yan's side, an indescribable orb appeared in front of her. The orb slowly moved, and as it got faster, it struck the seal as if it had sunk into it. Other than that, various spells were hitting the chains of the seal as well.

Naturally, we heard a roaring sound. It felt like the sound was going to destroy my

eardrums, but Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo broke through the wave of the explosion. Since they were the ones who could inflict the greatest damage, I was sure that they would find the weak point and take care of it. The others might not be able to see the two, but I could clearly see them. When the holy shield disappeared around them, their skin started to peel, but they didn't let go of their swords as they focused their mana on one hand. Being able to withstand the shockwave of the explosion was already hard enough, and even though they seemed to be in bad condition, they forcefully swallowed the blood about to come out of their throats and swung their swords. I couldn't help but be frustrated because the chains of the seal didn't look like it was going to break.

'Don't die, Hyun-Sung!'

"Deok-Gu, get ready to pull Mr. Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo back," I ordered.

"*Ah*, okay! I-I got it," he answered.

"I want the priests to use as much holy power as you can. Miss Hee-Young, Mr. Ki-Mo! Please focus your holy power on the location that I point at. Mages, be prepared to use defense magic at any moment, and vanguards, move in along with Park Deok-Gu. Dialugia, shoot it as soon as the next one is ready," I commanded.

"A-Are you going too, hyung-nim?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yeah…"

I didn't have time to talk because if Kim Hyun-Sung died, then I would die as well.

That was when something massive came at us.

'Fragment?'

It was one of the giant tentacles. The monster seemed like it just wanted to free its body since it hadn't targeted us just yet, but that was enough to make us hold our breath. When a large shadow fell on us, I couldn't help but look up.

'Are we going to die?'

Thankfully, Dialugia blocked the attack.

'Shit.'

I felt happy, but sad at the same time because she used her Breath at the tentacles that were flying toward us. There was nothing we could do about it. If those tentacles landed on us, not only would I die, but the entire party would have been annihilated. The resulting shockwave from Dialugia's Breath caused my body to almost fall backward, but Park Deok-Gu grabbed and stopped me from rolling.

Another wave of spells landed on the chains, and Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo were still trying to break the chains of the seal. However…

'It's not enough.'

We didn't lack a *lot* of power, though—just a little more. I thought it would break with just a bit more power, but right now, it wasn't breaking.

'Shit.'

Naturally, I thought about where I could bring in more firepower, but I couldn't think of anything. That was when I looked at the sword I was holding.

"Juliena?"

I thought this was the only way.

"…"

"Juliena! My Juliena!"

"…"

"Wake up, Juliena. *Ohh,* my Juliena! I need you! Juliena! I need you!" I begged.

I may seem like a crazy person, but this was the only way. It was surprisingly humiliating to try and talk in the tone used in Shakespearean comedies, but this was the only thing I could do right now.

"*Ohh*, Juliena! My love! Wake up, Juliena. Please! Please save me and my comrades! My love, Juliena!" I called out again.

‘Shit.’

“Juliena! Shit! Juliena, my ass!” I cursed.

It was my mistake to try to rely on an item like this, and when I was thinking about our annihilation, I heard a voice I hadn’t heard in a long time.

- *Aaaahhh!* Gedric! My Gedric! My Gedric!!

“*Huuuh?*”

- *Aaaahhhh!* My love, Gedric! My everything! My all! The light and hope of my life! My savior. My eternal flower! Gedric! Finally! Finally! I finally heard your voice! My Gedric!

Author's Comment:

Max: N-No! My museum! My museum!

CHAPTER 239
JULIENA'S AWAKENING (2)

'Nice.'

"Nice!"

The voice gave me goosebumps, but I was happy. It would be difficult to fix the situation afterwards, but taking care of the task in front of us first was the right thing to do. After all, I would fix it later was one of my favorite sentences.

"My Juliena! You have finally awakened! You have no idea how long I have been waiting for you," I said.

- Gedric! My Gedric. I've also wanted to be with you for such a long time.

"Juliena!"

- Gedric!

It was kind of scary looking at the sword that was making strange noises as it floated around me. It was because I was kind of scared that the sword was going to pierce through my neck after saying, *"You're not Gedric."*

But…

'It's okay.'

There weren't any signs of that yet. Juliena still thought I was Gedric and was moving to protect me.

'It's a good thing I have been wearing it.'

[Gedric's Proposal Ring - Epic Rank]

[Resistant to Juliena's curse.]

I found Gedric's Proposal Ring at the Cursed Shrine, and naturally, I thought it was a good thing that I had been wearing this on my pinky finger, even though it had no other functions. It was the lower middle-class way of thinking to always react to approaching threats. I couldn't help but smile.

"Juliena! My Juliena! We don't have time for this, Juliena!" I told her.

- Gedric… *Ahh!* My love, Gedric! Please kiss me. Hold me until this body crumbles!

'But you're a sword… '

"Juliena! I need your power. We need to break the seal of the evil Rift Guardians who have been holding the Ancient God against its will," I informed her.

- *Ahh!* My love, Gedric! Speak words of love to me a bit more. Gedric! My hope! My light!

'This crazy bitch!'

From the start, I thought it would be difficult to control her, but I couldn't help but realize that she was even crazier than I thought. I wasn't sure what this Gedric guy liked so much about this woman that he had spent a long time looking for her, but I guarantee that it could be a type of Stockholm Syndrome. It was possible that he had been captured, and for some reason, that thought was embedded in one part of my head.

"Help me! Juliena! I need your love," I begged.

- Gedric! My Gedric!

"Juliena! The world is in danger!" I shouted.

- *Ahh…*

'Shit!'

I couldn't delay any longer. If I continued to talk to Juliena like this, the entire party would get annihilated, and that was only when she would start moving, so I had no choice but to take Juliena and run toward the monster. I didn't know how to use a sword, but when I infused my mana into the sword while running, I felt a difference.

- Gedric! I can feel your warm mana flowing in! Your mana is flowing into my body! *Ahh!* My love, Gedric! *Ahh!*

'Just shut up!'

I wanted her to be quiet, but the effect was better than I had imagined.

'Huh?'

- A little more! Just a little bit more! Gedric! A little more of your love!

'C-Crazy bitch!'

[One of Juliena, the Cursed Sword's dormant skills has been unlocked.]

[Tentacle of A.S.][1]

'Nice!'

Up until now, the only skill Juliena had was cursing people, and that alone made her very valuable. She could curse the opponent just by injuring them, and if she consumed a large amount of mana, she could cast a wide-area curse. Those skills were enough to make her a legendary-ranked weapon, and she even protected me autonomously, which made her even more valuable. However, those weren't the only skills Juliena had. Aside from those useful skills, this weapon possessed different types of power, and I had seen that skill when she and Kim Hyun-Sung fought.

"Nice!"

Of course, she had used the black magic of A.S. before, but the magic that was flowing out of the sword right now was different from before. If the skill she used before was like the closed-beta version, then the skill I was seeing right now was a skill that had been upgraded a few times. The black magic tentacles Juliena had used before started to bloom around the sword. What made me kind of nervous was the fact that the tentacles kept tying themselves around me, but I knew she wasn't going to hurt

me. To make things worse, the black magic tentacles shooting up from the ground were trying to crawl under my clothes, which gave me goosebumps. Luckily, the tentacles weren't limiting my movements, but obviously, I thought about how these tentacles could bind me at any moment. Based on appearance alone, these tentacles were intimidating, but they weren't the problem. Actually, the problem actually was…

- More… more! *Ahh!* Gedric, your love! More of your love!

'Stop draining my mana!'

Juliena was draining my mana like crazy, and of course, I felt burdened by it because my magic stat was low. The goosebumps were there as well, as it felt like she was sucking out my life along with my mana, but the result I was seeing was better than what I had imagined.

'Eat just a little bit more!!!'

I already knew that the energy inside the sword was something I couldn't release, and obviously, I didn't have the power to control that energy. The black tentacles stretching out in all directions had long been out of my control, but I didn't have the power to control them anyway. All I had to do was attack the chains with the overflowing energy.

"Deok-Gu!" I shouted.

"*Ah*… got it!" Park Deok-Gu replied.

Park Deok-Gu stretched his hand toward me as if I looked interesting, but he seemed to have understood what was going on without any explanation, which made me proud. Even if the tentacles were wrapped around my body, throwing myself into the explosion was impossible for me. I felt kind of bad, but I needed Park Deok-Gu's help.

'I need you to get hurt for me.'

As expected, a transparent and faint shield appeared on my body. Park Deok-Gu's attribute allowed him to take the damage the target would receive. When I touched the ground with my crackling hand, a dragon's tail shot up from the ground and lifted me up to where the chains were. It was kind of scary, but even if I fell, Park Deok-Gu would take the damage for me. So, right now, swinging my sword was the

priority.

The seal that looked like it was about to break was still firmly in place. Obviously, the shockwave of the explosion didn't deal any damage to me, as I neither felt hot nor was my skin peeling.

'Hang in there, Deok-Gu!'

"Mr. Ki-Young?"

I guess Kim Hyun-Sung was surprised to see me break through the wave because he spoke as if he was asking, *"Why are you here, hyung?"* but I ignored him. I didn't have the energy to answer, and I couldn't really hear him due to the explosion.

"Break already! Shit!"

Obviously, I used the sword filled with energy and struck the area that looked the weakest. The magic tentacles wrapped around my body, and the tentacles all over the place fell toward the chains as my remaining mana was consumed in an instant.

- Gedric! Gedric! Gedriic! *Ahh! Ah!*

"Break! Break!"

If one hit weren't enough, then I would hit it again and again. Even though an amateur was swinging the sword, I was sure I would improve in the midst. It may look like I was hitting it with a club, but I knew the seal was at its limit because I saw a crack in the chains of the seal. The crack was very fine, but the chains were breaking.

'Alright!'

That was when Kim Hyun-Sung, who had jumped from out of nowhere and through the smoke, started swinging his sword toward the area I was hitting. I was surprised but relieved.

'I was at my limit.'

Juliena had taken too much of my mana, and because I didn't have the energy to keep hitting the chain, I was thankful for his arrival. There was definitely a difference

between hitting it randomly and hitting it while knowing how to use a sword. The moment our lovely regressor's sword struck the cracked part of the chains, a blue chain broke, and it started to emit light.

"Nice!"

I felt Kim Hyun-Sung's hand around my waist, and my body started to get further and further away from the chains against my will, and that was when I saw the Fragment of the Ancient God once again.

'I'm sure we… did the right thing.'

What we broke was one of the chains wrapped around the monster, and since the balance of the seal holding down the mythical being was broken, the other chains started to break as well. Actually, it was more like the monster was breaking them apart. It was truly remarkable how the monster had used an unknown skill to break the chains apart when we had to use everything we had to break one chain.

'It looks really strong… '

That was when I started to realize what we had released into the world, and my body started to tremble in response. I had a hard time walking, but that much was easy to understand.

[The Fragment of the Ancient God has been released from the seal.]

[Warning.]

[The Rift Museum's protection program will now activate.]

[Warning.]

[The program isn't working properly.]

[Warning.]

[Activating the backup program.]

[Warning.]

[The Fragment of the Ancient God has fully awakened.]

"*Roooooooooooar!!!*"

- *Ahh… ahhhhh… No!!!*

I heard Max's cry and the Fragment of the Ancient God's roar at the same time.

'A backup program?'

I didn't know what that was, but I guess the Rift Museum had some sort of program that could fix situations like this. Of course, I didn't know whether that backup program actually had the ability to fix this or not, but the die was cast.

'Let's see you try to fix this.'

It was now up to Manager Max. Cheating someone was a lot better than getting cheated on, but I couldn't smile in this situation.

Even if we broke the monster's chains, we were still in danger, and we might die before the monster became a threat to the world.

It seemed like that fragment didn't have the ability to think, so there was no point in showing respect to the Ancient God and doing three cheers for them. However…

"Let's cheer! For the A-Ancient God!" I shouted.

"…"

"The Ancient God has awakened! For the Fragment of the Ancient God!"

To shout first was the lower middle-class way of thinking. I wasn't sure if my cheering had reached the monster, but its struggle started to create big results. The outer walls of the museum that looked unbreakable were starting to crumble, and the impenetrable exhibition hall was crumbling as well.

'I knew it.'

The monster could resist the system.

"*Roooooooooooar!!!*"

When the main large tentacle started swinging, the museum started to break apart.

- N-Noooooooo!!!

Max screamed, and during all of this, I spoke to the expedition party.

"Let's… Let's go to the area that crumbled down and grab some of the items for now. I'm sure that there are a few exhibition halls that have been affected by the Ancient God as well."

Author's Comment:

Lee Ki-Young: You fix it. I'll take what I need… Hehehe

1. Pending clarification ☜

CHAPTER 240
MYTHIC-RANKED ITEM (1)

Everyone looked at me with confusion. Even I thought it was kind of shocking, but we had to increase our stat even just a little bit by acquiring items.

'There could be a mythic-ranked item.'

I had to do something, and increasing the party's overall stat was a necessity, not a choice.

"Also, I think it'll be good to find those that have been trapped," I added.

"Is there a way to fix that?"

"It's the museum manager that needs to fix it, not us. Since the backup program has been activated, I'm sure the functions the Rift Guardians had installed will activate as well. What's important right now is our safety and nothing else. Let's move quickly. Mr. Hyun-Sung, I'm having a hard time moving right now…" I said.

"*Ah*… right," Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

When I looked up while being carried by him, he nodded as if he understood.

'It's worse than I thought… '

Honestly, his body wasn't normal either, and it was understandable since he took all that damage from the explosion while swinging his sword at the chains. Even Park Deok-Gu's condition was bad since he took damage for me. Sun Hee-Young and Ahn Ki-Mo were still using their holy power, but it looked like it was going to take some time to heal the wounds.

- Gedric… Gedric!

During all of this, Juliena was still calling out Gedric's name. She did get quiet when I sheathed her, but the way she kept buzzing made it seem like she was really anxious.

'I have to think about our escape as well.'

"We'll escape through the exhibition hall next to us. It may awaken the other monsters, so I think it'll be best if we let the monster move to the opposite direction of the monster exhibition hall," I suggested.

"*Ah*… got it."

"Let's move quickly so we can recover a bit. Let's go," I added.

Everyone nodded. I was sure they all wanted to rest. I wasn't the only one whose mana had reached its limit. To break the seal the Rift Guardians had cast, we had to use mana beyond our limits. Everyone's stamina stat had to be really high because they were walking fine, but I could exaggerate my pain a bit.

'Because I really can't move my body.'

Obviously, it wasn't my intention to become close to our warm and strong Kim Hyun-Sung, but the situation wasn't so bad. I was bothered by how the Black Swan Guild members were looking at us strangely despite the fact that we were all tired, but I didn't care.

'They probably won't think that I'm exaggerating my pain.'

I was sure everyone knew that I had a weak body.

Anyway, after I finished talking, everyone started rushing toward the large hole while in Dialugia's arms. We left the Fragment of the Ancient God running rampant and entered the exhibition hall. We heard its roar behind us, but the monster wasn't focused on us.

'Obviously… '

The figure that had sealed it for an immeasurable amount of time was close to it. I was sure the monster's rage wouldn't die down until it demolished everything in this museum, and obviously, the museum was in very poor condition. The majority of the exhibition halls had crumbled, and the items inside them had been completely destroyed as well. Even after using Mind's Eye, there were so many useless items whose ranks I still couldn't see.

'There's nothing here.'

"Let's go to the next room. If we stay here, we may get affected by the aftermath. Our goal for now is the management room," I informed them.

"The management room?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

"Yes, I'm sure Max's actual body is in that room. He's probably busy seeing that he's not here with us… It's probably difficult for him to keep an eye on us now. Miss Yeon-Joo, please take off the ring you received before entering the dungeon since we no longer need the dungeon manager's guidance," I explained.

"I was thinking about taking it off anyway," she commented.

"And… Ha-Yan," I called out.

"Yes, Oppa?"

"I think it'll be good if you create a map with the ranged members of the Black Swan Guild. I'm fine, so you don't have to worry about me. I just can't move because I have exhausted all my mana," I assured her.

"Okay, Oppa…" she muttered.

"Does Miss Ha-Yan know how to draw maps?"

"No, but she's always checking my location, so I'm sure she'll be helpful. It should be pretty detailed and precise," I replied.

"You two are… an interesting couple."

I didn't bother answering when Park Yeon-Joo looked at us as if we were unique. I guess it was interesting to see the girlfriend tracking her boyfriend and her boyfriend tolerating it. If we were on Earth, her actions would definitely make me feel uncomfortable, but since we were at a place like this where something could happen to me, or I could get kidnapped at any time, it was completely reasonable to allow it.

'Of course, it's based on my standards… '

“I think Miss Hee-Young, Mr. Ki-Mo and the other priests should rest for a bit. If all of you become worn out, it’ll be impossible to continue the expedition,” I suggested.

“Got it.”

“I know it’ll be difficult to relax, but please take a break,” I added.

“Hyung-nim is right. It’s not good to move so hastily, and not only is it difficult for us to fight right now, but we can’t even walk properly,” Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

“You’re right, Deok-Gu.”

“In that sense—”

“I was thinking about setting up camp once we have gotten far enough from that place, anyway,” I interrupted him.

“Are we going to eat?” asked Park Deok-Gu.

“Of course, we’re going to eat, but we’re going to have to eat sparingly since we lost a few supplies,” I answered.

Taking a break was that important, and if the situation allowed it, I wanted to suggest that we take a nap, but I knew better than anyone that it was impossible. Considering the fact that we could still hear the monster’s roar, I honestly didn’t want to recommend setting up camp.

‘But we have no choice… ’

The expedition party was in really bad condition, so I had no choice but to suggest that we take a break. While resting, I heard something breaking, and one of the Fragment of the Ancient God’s tentacles pierced the left wall.

“*Ah!* That scared me!”

“That’s…”

“I-I almost got knocked over.”

If that surprised Jung Ha-Yan to the point that she was holding her chest in pain due

to shock, I couldn't imagine how surprised the others were. It was up to people like me to calm the expedition party down. It surprised me as well, but I spoke as if it didn't affect me.

"I'm sure it wasn't targeted toward us. I think it was just wiggling, but I think it would be best to move somewhere where we can't see that tentacle," I recommended.

"B-But why is it staying still?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I'm not sure since I don't really know what the Fragment of the Ancient God is. It does look like it's trying to take root. It could be trying to stop the functions of this museum or absorb the mana flowing within the museum itself. Right now, it's better to think about one thing rather than many things," I explained.

"O-Okay."

I managed to keep Park Deok-Gu quiet, but I couldn't help but be curious as well. The main body *did* seem like it was rampaging…

'Is it really trying to consume it?'

It would probably be best to ask Dialugia about it later since she said she had heard about the Fragment of the Ancient God. After returning to her human form, she looked as if something was on her mind, so I was certain she knew something. Thankfully, she didn't look too serious; rather, she looked ashamed. She chose to set aside and forget her duty as a dragon, but it was still the duty of the dragon race to protect the balance of this continent. Since she had contributed a lot when we were trying to break the chains, I assumed she was thinking about her late grandmother or something.

Anyway, the expedition continued. Using the map Jung Ha-Yan had created and the ranged players as the base, we started to figure out the museum's layout. We did see the Ancient God's tentacles from time to time, but those tentacles weren't moving.

'I'm sure they're taking root.'

The Rift Museum had turned into a museum that had been consumed by the Fragment of the Ancient God, and although I didn't know what kind of result this was going to bring, one thing I was certain of was that it made the exploration a lot easier.

The walls previously blocked by the museum's system had shattered from the impact the players made, and that was enough proof that…

'I'm certain of it. The monster is consuming it.'

I could tell from the situation around us that the museum's functions were failing. I was curious about how the backup program that the museum had activated was going to fix this issue but leaving just to check that was a stupid thing to do. Considering the fact that I could still hear the monster's roar from far away, the museum still had to be fighting the tentacles' eyeball. I was sure the monster's side was a mess right now.

'Of course, they can't stop the monster.'

If the museum's function really was failing, then it was possible that the sealed monsters were going to wake up, and they may even fight with each other. It was a simple assumption of mine, but my guess regarding the monsters' awakening could actually become reality. Of course, Max seemed to be working hard in trying to fix this issue because the museum looked like it wasn't going to fall anytime soon…

'Can he stop it?'

I didn't know which side to root for, but there was a happy scenario being drawn in my head. After rescuing the trapped members, we would gather the items, and after escaping the museum, the museum would seal the Fragment of the Ancient God once again. That would be the perfect scenario with no loose ends. Of course, it was in my nature to think about the worst-case scenario, so it was difficult to think about the happy scenario, but since there wasn't anything I could do about the situation, it wouldn't be so bad to think positively.

That was when I thought we had traveled far enough from the location where the battle began.

"*Uh*… I think this place is safe…" Park Deok-Gu commented quietly.

"It's definitely… fine."

Jo Hye-Jin nodded. The Fragment of the Ancient God was nowhere to be seen, and the place was big enough to accommodate 30 people. The most important part was…

“Hyung-nim! There are items all over the place! I think the function here has failed as well… Not even the exhibition hall is working. *Oh!* I think there are a few legendary items over there… Can I really take this?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Oppa, there’s a staff here! I-I think this is a legendary item as well!” Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

“I think there are a few epic-ranked items here… Since they have fallen from the rift, they seem to be in better condition compared to their original rank[1]. I can also see items that increases one’s holy power, Mr. Ki-Young,” Sun Hee-Young pointed out.

“Is there something you want, Hee-Young noonim?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“It’s more like I’m curious about the scripture from the other world… than being greedy…” she replied.

There was a completely intact item. They knew they could obtain it, but they couldn’t stop their jaw from dropping, and I thought about how cute they looked when I saw their reaction. Everyone was in a great mood, and some people were even rubbing their eyes. However, when I slowly turned my head, I couldn’t stop my jaw from dropping as well.

‘Uh… ’

There was a sword shining faintly in pure white.

‘A-Amazing… ’

It did look kind of tacky, but I knew it was a great sword just by looking at it. The light emitting from the sword was pointing directly at Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘A m-mythic rank.’

He had hit the jackpot.

‘Hyun-Sung! We’re safe now, right?!’

It had been a while since a bright smile appeared on my face.

Author's Comment:

Kim Hyun-Sung: Ki-Ki-Young hyung! This one is mine, right?

1. The items that fell from the rift has a better condition than the items originally created on this continent ☜

CHAPTER 241
MYTHIC-RANKED ITEM (2)

I was worried about how I was going to fix this situation that had become so complicated, but I was really happy right now. The light Kim Hyun-Sung was receiving from the mythic-ranked sword made him look like a warrior and hero in fairy tales.

'Wow… '

From the moment I saw Kim Hyun-Sung, I told myself that I would stick close to him and even though I had been doing that all this time, I had never felt so relieved about following him as I was feeling right now.

'You're magnificent, Hyun-Sung! You're going to make me jizz my pants!'

Protagonists were usually male, and I recalled the time Juliena had chosen me. This time, however, the situation was completely different. I couldn't help but acknowledge the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung and I were different. The white light approached Kim Hyun-Sung as if it was pulling him in, and Kim Hyun-Sung slowly reached his hand out as well. The scene felt like the sword originally belonged to him. I was sure I wasn't the only one watching him.

The architecture was ancient, and the background was basically a ruin thanks to the Fragment of the Ancient God. A handsome man was at the center of all of this, and of course, the group of women from the Black Swan Guild started screaming.

I knew the world was unfair, but I confirmed that truth once again. I felt like I was watching some kind of religious ceremony because Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he had been chosen by god. The floating sword slowly landed on his hand, and it only took a moment for the bright light to fill the entire room.

Whoooooosh!

Kim Hyun-Sung placed the sword at his waist as if nothing had happened and then spoke with an embarrassed look. Park Yeon-Joo replied. Unlike me, who could see

the details of the sword from the start, I was sure the others had lots of questions.

“I think I have succeeded in becoming its owner.”

“Yes… that seems to be the case. Is it a mythic-ranked sword?”

“Yes, it is. As its user, I think I’m still not capable enough because I can’t use all of its skills just yet, but even when comparing it to a legendary-ranked item, the sword doesn’t lack anything. First, I’d like to apologize to everyone in the Black Swan Guild,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“No, there’s no need for you to apologize at all, Mr. Hyun-Sung. It’s not like we can gain ownership of the sword just because we want to, and we also don’t have the authority to stop it from choosing its owner. It’s even more applicable in this case since the sword had approached you on its own. In addition, you’re the one helping us, so I don’t want to cause any issues. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t jealous, but I’m happy that things had worked out for you, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” Park Yeon-Joo explained.

“I appreciate your consideration,” he responded.

Honestly, it could have been problematic.

‘He was lucky.’

Even though the Blue Guild was helping the Black Swan Guild, he had basically taken an extremely valuable item with neither prior discussion nor agreement. If the Black Swan Guild wanted to, they could nitpick about it, but Guild Master Park Yeon-Joo fancied Kim Hyun-Sung, and because of the uniqueness of the weapon choosing its owner, the matter was handled without any issues.

‘Since it chose him, it’s only right that we take it.’

An item was useless without a wielder. It was unfortunate, but when I thought about how we wouldn’t be able to take the legendary shield and the staff Park Deok-Gu and Jung Ha-Yan were looking at, I noticed Jung Ha-Yan being enveloped in gold light.

‘Good job, Ha-Yan!’

She had also succeeded in becoming the owner of a weapon.

“I-I’m sorry,” Jung Ha-Yan apologized.

A faint smile appeared on her face as she bowed. I noticed her running happily over to the staff when she discovered it, and in the end, she caused trouble by using her mana on it. It was actually my fault for not being able to control her but to be honest, I was happy. I forcefully held back my smile and started talking.

“Jung Ha-Yan.”

“I’m sorry… Oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan apologized again.

“Deok-Gu, put down the shield,” I ordered.

‘Don’t put it down.’

“Deok-Gu,” I called out again.

‘Hurry up and start the ownership ceremony! You pig! Use your mana on it and take it! I’ll take care of the situation! In situations like this, you need to worry about the problem later.’

“O-Okay, hyung-nim,” Park Deok-Gu replied.

‘Take it!’

Unfortunately, he didn’t get the hint. When Park Deok-Gu placed the shield down, he smacked his lips and took two steps back. It was a bit unfortunate, but I continued talking while I swallowed the bitterness I felt.

“I think you should put the item down for now, Miss Hee-Young. Same thing for you, Mr. Ki-Mo. I understand that you’re excited, but we’re not the only ones here. The leader of the expedition is in charge of the item distribution, and the leader is Miss Park Yeon-Joo. There’s nothing we can do about Mr. Hyun-Sung’s case, but Ha-Yan—” I paused.

“I’m sorry,” she apologized again.

‘No need to be sorry. You did really well. Do that again next time.’

It wouldn’t be a bad idea to give Jung Ha-Yan a gift after we leave the dungeon.

“It must have happened without her knowing it. You shouldn’t scold her… In situations like this, you have to be as cool-headed as me—Park Deok-Gu. That’s right!”

The slow-witted Park Deok-Gu was taking Jung Ha-Yan’s side and was proud of himself for remaining calm, but that pig had to be punished instead of rewarded.

‘You’re going to get it once we return.’

However, I couldn’t express that right now. I stopped myself from calling him an idiot, and I spoke quietly while looking at Park Yeon-Joo.

“I’ll apologize in her place.”

“It’s fine, Mr. Ki-Young. No use crying over spilled milk, and it’s better to congratulate her rather than being angry,” she replied.

“I’m really sorry,” I said once again.

“You don’t have to keep apologizing. In our current situation, increasing our stats is more important, so those who could use those weapons should take them. Surviving is the top priority right now. Since Miss Ha-Yan has succeeded in the ownership ceremony, it means that she’s the one who can use the weapon to its full potential. Our mages seem fine with it as well… Congratulations, Miss Ha-Yan,” Park Yeon-Joo explained.

“Th-Thank you…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

‘That’s right.’

I was certain of it—Park Yeon-Joo was an angel. It seemed like she was only acting really nice because she was conscious of Kim Hyun-Sung, but when I saw how she allowed people to take such valuable items, I was envious of Kim Hyun-Sung again. I had a feeling his dating life would bring him a much brighter tomorrow.

‘It makes sense.’

I really liked the fact that Park Yeon-Joo cared more about our survival rather than being greedy over what was in front of us. I thought I finally understood why she had appointed Lee Ji-Hye to a higher position and gave her the authority to handle the

matters of the guild, even though the latter had nothing to offer back then.

“Would it be fine if we took the remaining items to see if there’s anyone from our guild who can use them?” she asked.

“Yes, I think that would be best,” I replied.

I also liked the fact that she was trying to get what she needed during a situation like this.

‘I’m jealous of you, Kim Hyun-Sung.’

Compared to him, a part of me was being restricted by the smiling Jung Ha-Yan, who was being congratulated by Jo Hye-Jin and Park Yeon-Joo. During all of this, Juliena was still buzzing as she was trying to talk to me again. Maybe it was the aftereffect of awakening after spending such a long time hibernating, but she quickly became quiet, and I was sure there was a difference between the mythic-ranked sword Kim Hyun-Sung had obtained and Juliena.

Anyway, if I were to organize the situation as a whole, the Blue Guild obtained a mythic and legendary-ranked item. The remaining legendary item was the shield Park Deok-Gu was touching and high-quality epic-ranked items. We would have a chance since the ownership ceremony had to be done on the shield as well, but the Black Swan Guild would probably take the epic-ranked items. I was bothered by Sun Hee-Young glancing at the epic-ranked secondary item categorized as a bible, but even for me, it was pretty difficult to ask for that item because there were four priests in our party. They were all equipped with epic-ranked items, but there was no guarantee that they didn’t want *that* item. Since it was a secondary item, priests equipped with double-handed staff would find it difficult to use, but there was no end to human greed.

Waiting was the right thing to do for now. That was because…

[Sword of the 12 Knights - Durandal - Mythic Rank]

[In mythology, it’s a famous sword used by the leader of the 12 Knights. This famous sword, known to cut through anything, hasn’t lost its light despite the countless years. Unable to access further details. - Durandal doesn’t break.]

[Blood-Stained Red Jewel - Anemone - Legendary Rank]

[This is a staff decorated with jewels made from the blood of the goddess' husband's lover, whom she killed after being blinded by jealousy. Not only does it amplify the user's magic, but the user will awaken to the unique magic knowledge embedded inside the jewel. The unique magic knowledge that can be used has been limited because the user's growth limit is low. Magic stat has increased by 10 points. - You'll be cursed, Anemone! You dirty whore Anemone! You'll be stuck inside that jewel for the rest of your life.]

Since we had obtained these items, I couldn't ask Park Yeon-Joo to give us the epic-ranked items as well. Even though Mind's Eye couldn't check the detailed information of mythic-ranked items and beings, which included the Fragment of the Ancient God and that green monster we had seen before, I could feel their energy.

'That's a treasure.'

The sword Kim Hyun-Sung had was a powerful weapon, and I even saw in the status window that it wouldn't break. The information I had acquired was limited, but it was enough to determine that it was valuable. Kim Hyun-Sung's swordsmanship was so great that he had been acknowledged as a seatholder of the continent's Eight Seats. There were rumors going around that he lacked experience, but that was a bunch of bullshit from idiots who had no idea he was a regressor. I didn't know what kind of skills the sword had, but if our perfect Hyun-Sung used that sword, the fact that it could cut through everything and would never break was more than enough for him to do his job.

I didn't even have to say much about the legendary-ranked staff Jung Ha-Yan had obtained.

'The explanation is making me kind of… nervous… '

I was happy because overall, the Blue Guild's rank had moved up.

The description about how the jealous goddess had killed her husband's lover and made a jewel out of her blood was enough to make me feel a shiver down my spine,

but it was still a good thing we acquired it.

'Anemone… '

It *did* fit Jung Ha-Yan, but I felt like something bad was going to happen. After completing the ownership ceremony, I guess Jung Ha-Yan had lost her interest in the large staff because I saw how she threw away the staff with the red jewel.

'If that's how she's going to act, why did she even run so quickly toward it and take it?'

It hadn't been that long since she discovered the staff and excitedly ran toward it. It was funny how she threw away the staff like some chewed-up gum after she was done with the ownership ceremony. I guess she wanted the stats embedded inside the staff more than the staff itself, but I was curious as to why she wanted the legendary-ranked staff while knowing that I was going to scold her. After seeing Jung Ha-Yan giggling without much thought, I instantly realized what she wanted.

'Magic stat… 97… '

It had only been a little over a year.

It was unofficial, but this was the moment when Jung Ha-Yan obtained power comparable to the seatholders of the continent's Eight Seats.

'W-Wait, time out… '

CHAPTER 242
A SHORT BREAK (1)

'This is not good… '

After spending a long time with Jung Ha-Yan, I realized that she was more meticulous and cunning than I thought. I didn't have the right to say this since I was trash myself, but the current Jung Ha-Yan was unlike the innocent Jung Ha-Yan in the past; she didn't immediately kill someone just because she wanted to do so. Her plots so far had been pretty *cute* because what she had really done was tell me about her rival's flaws and use her tears against me because she knew I was weak to them, but it was undeniable that she had significantly changed compared to when I first met her.

'But she still becomes blind once she turns crazy… '

Jung Ha-Yan was strong toward the weak and vice versa. She knew her strength and power more than anyone, and she knew that she was weak compared to others. She realized the sheer difference in strength and how weak she was when she first met Cha Hee-Ra and that was why she was so focused on her magic, but it could also be the reason why she wasn't aggressive toward the strong. Of course, she also had the ability to differentiate who was important to me, but she *definitely* knew that she was a predator even before she thought about the consequences of crippling Han Sora. It was just an assumption, but that was how I understood Jung Ha-Yan's actions.

'It's not good… '

I was happy that she was getting stronger, but on the other hand, I was bothered by it because I had no idea what trouble she might cause.

'Her magic stat is 97… '

Having one's main stat go over the mid-90s was the minimum requirement to become an influential figure on this continent. It made sense because even before the strengthening effect of Cha Hee-Ra's attribute, her strength stat was already 97. Ito Sota's agility was also in the high-90s, and even Park Yeon-Joo, who was currently

talking with the others, had a stat in the high-90s as well.

Obviously, one's power couldn't be measured by stats alone, but in Jung Ha-Yan's case, she just needed a little more experience, and she could become one of the top 10 influential figures of the empire. She *definitely* knew that fact, no, she knew it from the start. She had known long ago that what she needed was time and an item that would massively increase her stats. As such, while everyone was focused on Kim Hyun-Sung, she took an item for herself. I knew my assumption was correct because she directly threw the weapon aside after she had acquired the stats from the staff.

She had been quite weak compared to Cha Hee-Ra or Kasugano Yuno, but now, I believe she was catching up to them.

"*Hehe*."

Jung Ha-Yan was probably giggling about her stats more than the legendary item she had acquired and although she wasn't causing any trouble now, I had to set her straight from the start. I would have to educate her again someday after we leave the dungeon.

'She really… '

She really needed someone to periodically check up on her mental health and even though it was really bothersome, it was a cheap price to pay for the ability to summon a supreme archmage. However, I was starting to get really worried that she might cause trouble.

'I'm sure she won't.'

I sighed once again when she put her guard up toward the female members of the Black Swan Guild while holding my arm. Meanwhile, Park Deok-Gu approached us while talking loudly.

"Hey, hyung-nim! Noonim! It's time to eat!"

"Oppa! The food must be ready!" Jung Ha-Yan said.

"Looks like it's already time to eat," I commented.

"Yeah, *hehehe*."

“Wow… the food is really amazing! Yeon-Joo noonim cooked it herself and it’s so good my eyes almost popped out!” Park Deok-Gu complimented.

“Oh, yeah?” I asked.

“I have a feeling that Yeon-Joo noonim likes our guild master bro and she wanted to show him her cooking skills! That’s my hunch as Gwangwon Province’s Love Doctor, I can definitely smell something.” Park Deok-Gu pointed out.

It was amusing how he explained a fact everyone knew as if he was the only one who knew about it.

When I glanced over at Kim Hyun-Sung, I noticed he was busy with Park Yeon-Joo, which made it hard for him to approach us. Meanwhile, Jo Hye-Jin eating next to us seemed annoyed.

‘She’s jealous.’

As far as I could recall, she had always been stern around me, but I guess even she could make such an expression.

“We’re in the middle of an expedition, Mr. Deok-Gu. Please refrain from having personal conversations…”

“You don’t seem to be in a good mood either, Hye-Jin noonim… Are you feeling sad because our bro and Park Yeon-Joo noonim are getting along well?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“What…”

“*Ahem*. It can’t be helped if you don’t want to talk about it, but as the love doctor, I can see everything,” he added.

“S-Stop talking nonsense…” Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

“If you don’t want someone from another guild to take him, you better go to him now because they look like they’re enjoying themselves… As the preacher of love, I prefer that someone close gets into a relationship with our bro. You see, eating together may not seem like a big deal, but it actually is a pretty big deal,” he continued.

"*Ah*…"

"Usually when you're eating, a noona can become your darling and she can end up being your wife. You should hurry and go to him since it looks like the noonim from the Black Swan Guild are trying to set them up. Otherwise, you'll regret it," he suggested.

"That's…"

"Run over there before she becomes his wife," he told her.

"Th-This isn't really the reason why I'm going over there… I'm heading over to the guild master because I just remembered something I had to report to him, Sub Guild Master," Jo Hye-Jin informed me.

"Okay, Miss Hye-Jin. Good luck," I said.

"That's really not the reason why I'm going over there," she repeated.

I guess she was in a hurry because she even forgot to take her spear with her when she stood up while blushing. The sight made me chuckle. She stood up clumsily with her food tray and ran toward Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo. The way her hair swayed back and forth felt as if it represented her feelings.

'How cute.'

Now, that was what you call young love.

She was different from Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young openly expressing to the others that they shouldn't come near them, but what was kind of surprising was that Sun Hee-Young wasn't that close to the Black Swan Guild members. She was a priest, but in addition to not getting along with the carefree members, it seemed like she didn't like them as well. She didn't express that, but that was what it looked like to me.

'I need to talk to her, too… '

I had been neglecting it, but Sun Hee-Young was a person who also had to be looked after. The only reason why I wasn't as worried about her as I was with Jung Ha-Yan was that she knew how to discipline herself, unlike Jung Ha-Yan. Just like how Kim

Hyun-Sung trusted Jo Hye-Jin as an adjutant, I trusted Sun Hee-Young as well.

'She's good at her job, and she's rational… '

This was off-topic, but her appearance was my ideal type. In addition, there was no man alive who disliked a church noona-style woman giving off a holy vibe.

I was *definitely* thinking about useless things because I was physically tired and when I focused on Sun Hee-Young for a moment, I felt Jung Ha-Yan squeezing my arm.

'It's nothing like that, Ha-Yan. Don't get all worked up… '

When I gently stroked her head, Park Deok-Gu spoke up.

"Hey, hyung-nim. This is a different topic, but."

"Yeah?" I asked.

"I know we're enjoying our break, but… I'm not sure if we should be doing this," he replied.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"*Ahem*. I think we're too relaxed. At least, that's what I think…" he added.

"*Ahhh*."

It did seem like that. Since we had to distribute the epic-ranked items, we decided to set up camp and after preparing the meal, we decided to let all the members rest and be comfortable. Of course, the members with ranged jobs were taking turns surveying the surroundings, but it wasn't an exaggeration to say that everyone was *really* relaxed. The people eating their food quietly were the smart ones, but there were some who went into a tent to sleep, and even a few Black Swan Guild members were reading a book together.

'How the Genius Swordsman and Alchemist Loves? Volume Three?'

When I unknowingly looked at the title of the book, I recall seeing that title before. I guess it really was a best-seller in Lindel.

'I should try reading it.'

I had no idea what it was about, but I guess it had to be a really enjoyable book because they were reading it together.

Anyway, it was understandable for Park Deok-Gu to feel uneasy since everyone was so relaxed. It felt as if they were pretending to ignore what happened earlier. However…

"There's nothing we can do right now."

"*Ah*…"

Sun Hee-Young chimed in quietly and obviously, I agreed with her.

"Miss Hee-Young is right. Right now, there's nothing we can do other than rest and there's no point in going back there as well… It's better to rest properly than take short breaks. I'm not sure if it's a good thing, but that Fragment of the Ancient God or whatever seems to have calmed down, so we can rest easy for now. By the way, we're going to be camping here today, and even though it's going to be short…" I explained.

"Really?" he asked.

"Yeah."

'Resting is the right thing to do right now.'

Naturally, I was anxious because the museum could suddenly collapse or the Fragment of the Ancient God could suddenly run rampant, which meant I would have to come up with a way to resolve it. To be honest, the situation we were in right now was pretty close to the worst situation I had imagined, but there really wasn't anything we could do right now. I guess Dialugia was silent because she wanted to focus on recovering since she had overused her powers to block the tentacles earlier. Moreover, Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo—the most powerful among us—were in really bad conditions.

'They look fine on the outside… '

But I was sure they were struggling inside. Obviously, I had high expectations for Kim Hyun-Sung since he had obtained a mythic-ranked item and his stats had definitely

increased as well, but that was only when his physical condition was normal. He was pretending to be fine, but I could tell how much damage he had taken for us through Mind's Eye. Since he had forced himself to use mana beyond his limits within that explosion, it wasn't strange to take that much damage. He told the expedition members that he would be fine while smiling, but overall, his body was in critical condition. The most nervous part was that we had no idea when this out-of-this-world being was going to run rampant again, and we also had to consider the possibility that Manager Max might try to kill us.

"So don't worry and rest for now, Deok-Gu. The rangers have been keeping an eye out and once we confirm its location, we'll immediately move and start fixing this situation," I told him.

"I'm fine, but I'm more worried about you, hyung-nim. Your face looks pale right now," he pointed out.

"It'll recover over time," I said.

I became even more anxious when Park Deok-Gu said that because he didn't really have a sense of crisis. I wanted to focus on recovering as well, but I felt like we should slowly move.

I couldn't help but glance over at Dialugia.

'Fragment of the Ancient God.'

Dialugia was the only one with information about the monster. I guess she was satisfied with her recovery because she opened her eyes just in time. I was done eating, so when I signaled her while standing up quietly, she also stood up. Park Deok-Gu must have realized that it was something important because he didn't follow and Jung Ha-Yan was trying to decide whether to follow me or not by reading my expression. I guess she had decided to wait for me since I didn't say anything and although it worried me that she had decided to stay put without making a fuss, it would make talking to Dialugia much easier for me.

'I should listen to her first.'

Since it was related to the destruction of the world, it would be helpful if I excluded some of the information and if the time came when I had to make a selfish decision, I would have to be the one to pull the trigger.

When we were somewhat far from the expedition party, Dialugia spoke just as I expected. I guess the situation was quite serious because she looked really anxious.

“You can talk now, Dialugia,” I told her.

“The continent will crumble…” Dialugia started.

“I see. Then… how can we fix…”

“30,000 years from now… the continent will collapse,” she added.

“Then how do we fix…”

“It’ll disappear without a trace. How can I face my ancestors… Do you have a plan to resolve this?” she asked.

“I guess there’s no need to fix all this,” I said.

I felt kind of relieved. I did feel scared at the news of the world crumbling, but I had never imagined it would happen after my death.

Dialugia was surprised by my answer, but I couldn’t help but feel happy about it.

‘30,000 years! Shit! I don’t have to do anything!’

It was a very selfish thought.

‘I do feel bad for the future generations since they have such a foolish ancestor… ’

I didn’t care if the world ended after I died. It was a shitty thought, but I joyfully clenched my fists.

‘YOLO!’

CHAPTER 243
A SHORT BREAK (2)

"What did you just…"

Dialugia looked shocked. I was sure she was at a loss for words when I told her I didn't need to fix all this, and when I even looked happy about it. I thought maybe I was being too obvious, but I didn't want to hide my feelings.

'30,000 years? Humanity will perish before then.'

It didn't matter to me whether humanity would perish by then or not.

I guess this continent had a long history considering that things related to the ancient kept on appearing…

'Actually, I'm sure the continent is pretty old.'

Dialugia was more than 4,000 years old, and I was sure the Dragon Lord existed as well. Considering that this continent was blessed by God, it was safe to assume that mankind had a long history here. The chances were low, but civilization here might remain the same even after 30,000 years.

'If you base it on the dragons, maybe it's different… '

I would probably live a long life, considering the fact that I was sharing a life with Dialugia, but it probably wasn't going to be 30,000 years.

While I was many different thoughts, Dialugia spoke once again.

"Did you just say there's no need to fix all this?"

"That's… not exactly what I meant…" I replied.

"I'm at a loss for words. Or is it simply because you don't understand the gravity of the situation? The Fragment of the Ancient God will slowly absorb the life of this

continent. It'll absorb the mana in the atmosphere and it'll start eating the land we're standing on. Lifeforms will start dying one by one and in the end, there will be nothing left," she explained.

"*Ah!* Is that what the tentacles do? So that's why the museum's functions have stopped. I don't think it really affects us, though… Are we safe?" I asked.

"That's not what's important right now. You're really!" Dialugia angrily said.

"Why are you so angry? Don't get worked up; speak slowly, Dialugia," I told her.

"This isn't the time to calm down! The situation is very serious!" she shouted.

"I don't understand why you're angry with me when you used Breath not that long ago. Honestly, you also played a big role in breaking the seal…"

"Th-That's…" she stuttered.

"Is it because dragons live more than 30,000 years? Is that the reason why?" I asked.

"That's not it. Our lifespans vary, but we usually live around 10,000 years or so since it's not possible to live any longer than that. As the spouse of a dragon, you'll follow the life of the dragon as well and live about 6,000 more years as long as there isn't an issue during your lifetime…" she answered.

It was kind of long, but living a long life was a good thing. I kind of expected it, but hearing her say it made me feel kind of uneasy.

"It won't be a problem since the world won't end in 3,000 years. Our Smartie will live comfortably for about 10,000 years and even if she had children, *hm*… it won't really affect them as well. It won't affect our grandchildren, so I don't understand why you're acting like this," I commented.

"What do you mean? I told you just now," she said.

"It's fine. The future generation will take care of everything," I told her.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Diaugia asked, dumbfounded.

"The future generation will be the ones to build the future," I replied.

Even though I was the one who said it, it was still a shitty and irresponsible thing to say. Dialugia looked disgusted by my reply, but I wasn't planning on putting my life on the line by jumping into battle once again.

'The future belongs to the future generation!'

There was nothing we could do about it.

"You're not supposed to use that saying here. The continent will fall and if we don't fix this now, it'll really happen. It's no different from us destroying the world with our own hands. H-How am I supposed to see my ancestors now… *aaahhh*." Dialugia pointed out.

It was *definitely* different from a dragon's point of view. Normally, a person may waver a bit if they heard that the world would be destroyed in 300 years. For a petite bourgeoisie like me, what would happen in the future didn't matter as long as I was living a comfortable life, but people like Kim Hyun-Sung may feel a big responsibility for it and Dialugia was probably that type of dragon.

"We have to fix all this no matter what," she said.

"By putting our lives on the line?" I asked.

"Not like that, but…"

"Let's be honest here, Dialugia. What's most important for you?" I asked her.

"What are you even saying…" she questioned.

"Aren't Smartie and I the most important?" I asked.

"That's…"

"You also contributed to the destruction of the Fragment of the Ancient God's seal. Think about it. If we keep this information to ourselves, then we can live happily, including Smartie. Honestly, we were really lucky earlier, as it wouldn't have been strange if we all died in that situation," I explained.

I was sure she would agree that we were lucky to be alive. Moreover, the Fragment of the Ancient God didn't recognize us as its enemies. The monster simply wiggled a bit,

but even its wiggling had been difficult to handle for us.

“I understand your love for the continent. I don’t know much about dragons, but I’m guessing you feel a sense of responsibility with the whole equilibrium thing. However, it’s okay to be selfish to an extent. If we do something wrong while trying to fix all this, everyone will die,” I continued.

“I know that, but…”

“We can’t just think about ourselves. Think about Smartie who’s on her own right now,” I added.

Dialugia was silent. Obviously, she felt really guilty.

‘She could really… ’

She could really sacrifice herself by jumping into the dangerous situation just so she could protect the continent because her attribute was The Giving Tree, but it was only if Smartie didn’t exist.

“Our Smartie is waiting for her parents to return. Do you really think I want to ignore the fate of this continent? What Smartie needs isn’t the fate of this continent, but her parents. Be honest. What’s more important to you? Smartie or the future people of this continent?” I asked.

“Smartie…” she replied.

“That’s right, she’s the most important, so there's no need to have complicated thoughts about this. *Ahem*…” I told her.

“Th-This isn’t right…” she muttered.

“Don’t worry so much. Didn’t you hear it earlier? That backup program or whatever has activated and the Rift Museum is trying its best right now to fix all this. If their preparations failed, then I’ll do my best to stop the monster as long as it’s within my power,” I said.

“Okay…” she mumbled.

When I patted her shoulder, Dialugia hung her head low. She seemed like she was

having a difficult time accepting the fact that she had somewhat agreed with what I had said, but her thoughts didn't matter. Just like how my life was the most important to me, Smartie was the most important to her.

'It's a relief we have Smartie… '

"By the way, it's probably best if you don't tell the expedition party about the continent getting destroyed or the world ending," I suggested.

"What?" she questioned.

"Ordinary humans will have similar thoughts as me, but there could be some who will feel responsible for it, so let's make a plan on what we're going to say," I suggested.

"I don't understand how we're going to do that," she said.

"Of course, it's going to be about the Fragment of the Ancient God. The party hasn't asked you questions since you've been recovering, but when we return, I'm sure they'll start asking questions. Out of everyone in the party, you're the only one who knows about the Ancient God and why the tentacles are embedded in the museum ground. I'm sure everyone is curious. I'll do all the talking, so all you need to do is make comments so that what I say will seem believable." I instructed her.

"Do I need to do that?" Dialugia questioned.

"If you don't want to do that, you can simply remain quiet… I do feel kind of uncomfortable since it feels like I'm the only one doing the dirty work. You should show me your feelings for Smartie," I requested.

Dialugia bit her lips and it was amusing how she nodded despite thinking how wrong this was. It felt like I was tainting something innocent, but this was the best thing to do right now. And while I was thinking about how we should tell everyone…

'Huh?'

I saw a strange object floating around.

'What's that… '

The funny part was that it seemed like Dialugia couldn't see it. But she must have felt that something was off because she commented about how the mana around us had become strange, but I was certain she couldn't see the object. Obviously, I used Mind's Eye to look at the transparent object.

[Anemone's Eyes]

[It's one of the unique spells passed down by the blood-stained gem, Anemone. You can view the world with Anemone's Eyes.]

'It's just Jung Ha-Yan… whew… '

I thought maybe the Fragment of the Ancient God was up to something, so I was nervous for a moment. I was relieved when I realized Jung Ha-Yan was just spying on us.

'I guess… she really adapted… '

It was a bit funny to say that I was relieved because it was honestly a really horrifying situation to be in. However, the interesting part was that Anemone's Eyes—which was a spying camera for Lee Ki-Young—was able to fool even Dialugia's eyes…

'This could be dangerous… '

I knew Jung Ha-Yan would achieve something, but this was more than what I had imagined. I didn't think she would immediately use the magic knowledge she had acquired from the unique magic that was passed on to her by the staff she had thrown away earlier. She *really* was a genius. I knew better than anyone that materializing a spell right away was difficult even if one had techniques and the spell itself.

I exclaimed for a moment, but Jung Ha-Yan's growth wasn't important right now. I could find out later exactly what she had acquired. For now, I just had to focus on what I should say to the expedition party. I was sure Jung Ha-Yan didn't really care about mankind or the continent's destruction and if she caught on to the fact that I

was going to lie to the expedition party, she would probably help me.

After Dialugia and I were done talking, we started walking toward the expedition party. The Anemone's Eyes that Jung Ha-Yan had created followed and was then turned off when she was finally able to see us with her own eyes.

"O-Oppa!" Jung Ha-Yan called out.

We were apart for only a few moments, but the way she ran to me as if we were having a family reunion was kind of cute. After stroking her hair once, she started growling as if she was Smartie. However, I couldn't focus on her alone because Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo had approached us. Naturally, I spoke as if nothing was wrong.

"I think we can relax for now."

"*Ah*, so you've already heard from her," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I did," I answered.

"Could you explain what you mean by we can relax for now?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

I guess she was starting to feel hopeful at my optimistic expression and the other expedition members were looking at me as well. They were resting as if it wasn't a big deal, but I guess they were somewhat anxious.

"Dialugia will explain it to you," I told them.

When I looked at her, I saw my innocent wife talking with an indifferent expression.

"I believe the Fragment of the Ancient God… has entered a r-resting period…" Dialugia stuttered.

Underneath her indifferent expression was a sense of guilt the others obviously wouldn't recognize.

CHAPTER 244
A SHORT BREAK (3)

"A resting period?" Park Yeon-Joo asked.

"Yes, a resting period. I believe there was some kind of side effect. I don't know the details, but I'm certain it'll continue to remain in that state. Maybe it'll be easier for you to understand if I told you that it sealed itself," Dialugia answered.

"That's… a relief."

Park Yeon-Joo nodded, and Kim Hyun-Sung released a sigh of relief. The other expedition members looked happy because they could have ended up fighting the Fragment of the Ancient God if something went wrong, and that was a situation no one wanted to imagine. It was out of pure luck that we survived the first time and everyone knew that.

'Even if that wasn't the case… '

Everyone was worried that the monster was going to run rampant again.

It was true that the monster was in a resting period. Of course, the main body was probably still fighting the backup program, but the tentacles far from us had taken root to absorb the museum's system, no, the entire continent. Since the monster wasn't attacking us, then it meant it was resting.

"There's also the Rift Guardian's duty that the museum has prepared, so the situation should… be fixed soon," Dialugia added.

"I'm glad… I'm glad things have worked out. I had never imagined that Mr. Ki-Young's decision was the right one…" Park Yeon-Joo commented.

"It was pure luck, and it was pretty dangerous as well. I know it's a bit late, but I'd like to apologize for causing trouble for the expedition party. I was honestly gambling and it could have put not only us in danger… but everyone in Lindel as well," I apologized.

“No need to apologize. There’s nothing we can do about a mythic-ranked monster randomly appearing and we’re alive because you managed to fix the situation, so we should be the ones thanking you. I know it’s late, but… thank you. If it wasn’t for your wit back then, some of our members would have died,” she explained.

“Your words flatter me. During that time, all I thought about was fixing the situation in front of me, so I just ran in without thinking,” I confessed.

If things had gone wrong, then I would have been in a bad situation and to be honest, I would have been labeled a traitor.

“But… what exactly is the Fragment of the Ancient God?” she asked.

“Dialugia will explain that to you,” I replied.

“*Ah*, well, I don’t really know the details because I haven’t lived that long and I only heard it from my mother and grandmother. All I know is that it existed since the beginning of time and that it could put the continent in danger,” Dialugia explained.

“So what Max said was true. It’s really shocking. I knew the dungeon we’re in was no ordinary dungeon, but even after hearing about ancient gods, fragments, and mythical beings, I still really couldn’t believe it. If it hadn’t been that long since we arrived here, I wouldn’t believe it even more,” Park Yeon-Joo expressed.

“I completely understand how you feel. Even though I’ve lived for over 4,000 years, I’ve only heard of those beings through stories. I had never imagined we would discover one in a place like this and it was a sealed being as well.”

Dialugia tried her best to continue the conversation and just then, we heard a loud voice.

“Can’t we just kill it without sealing it, to begin with? I don’t understand why this museum is making us do annoying things like that,” Park Deok-Gu complained.

“Killing the Fragment of the Ancient God is impossible. The monster is a god itself, not some being that has been deified. I’m sure sealing the fragment was the best the Rift Guardians could do. Of course, being overconfident was their mistake. I’m sure they had never imagined that the seal would break one day,” Dialugia explained.

“*Hm*… I see…” he commented.

“If the monster is in a resting period, then what are the tentacles throughout the museum doing right now?”

It wouldn’t matter if I answered Ahn Ki-Mo’s question because although I was really satisfied by the way Dialugia was answering everyone’s questions, the way she talked made me feel nervous. She didn’t seem out of place because she usually had a serious expression, but she seemed to be suppressing her sense of guilt every time she talked. Fortunately, the audience wouldn’t be able to notice her guilt because they weren’t *that* sharp-witted.

“The assumption we made earlier was correct. I’m sure it’s trying to stop the museum’s system since it was the seal that chained it up until now… Even though it’s in a resting period, its main body is probably still fighting the backup program or whatever and I’m sure the fight will end soon.”

“*Ahhh*, I see…”

“I see…”

After clearing my throat, I continued talking and it was toward everyone.

“Basically, I don’t think it’s going to be a big problem. The backup program will seal the monster in its resting period and there’s a high chance it’ll succeed. Don’t you agree, Dialugia?” I asked.

“Yes, he’s right,” she answered.

“I think we should rescue the trapped members and leave the museum before the system seals the monster. Now that the system is malfunctioning, we can leave the dungeon without completing the museum exploration. I’m kind of sad about not being able to complete the quest, though…” I added.

“There’s nothing we can do, right? Once the seal is complete, we could become affected by the museum’s system again…”

I nodded at Park Yeon-Joo’s answer.

I had no idea if Manager Max was really going to succeed in sealing the monster, but I wasn’t planning on going to his main body. If the tentacles simply absorbed the continent’s life in silence instead of shooting up from the ground to destroy the

world, then there was no reason for us to help in sealing it. Regardless of whether it was successfully sealed or not, what mattered was that the expedition party believed it was sealed. It was a perfect plan.

“Basically, I think it’s safe to say that we’ll no longer be affected by the Fragment of the Ancient God. And yes, the continent will be safe as well. I think we can stop worrying and rest for now. Don’t you think so, Dialugia?” I asked.

“Yes,” she answered.

“…”

“The continent… the continent…”

“…”

“T-The continent is… safe!” Dialugia shouted.

When Dialugia shouted the final words with her eyes shut, everyone nodded and exclaimed as well. I saw people clenching their fists while the others gave high-fives to each other. Park Deok-Gu also expressed his joy by hugging the members of his harem, and I was relieved to see that.

“It’s too early for us to be happy because we still have to capture the dungeon. As I’ve mentioned before, we still need to rescue the trapped survivors,” I reminded them.

“Yes, of course!”

“It’ll be kind of difficult to find them since this place is large, so I think the party should head to the museum’s management room,” I suggested.

When I made that suggestion, Kim Hyun-Sung spoke right afterward. Since he had a lot of experience, he knew better than anyone on how to get there.

“If we follow the fragment’s tentacles, we should be able to find where the museum manager is staying.”

“Okay.”

It wasn’t perfect, but everyone knew very well what kind of situation we were in, and

I was sure everyone had the same thought.

'We'll find Max by following the tentacles… '

And we should then be able to confirm the location of the survivors. At this point, I had to think about if I should make Max the main villain based on his actions so far. I would be thankful if he simply told us the survivors' location, but since we had put him in this situation, I was certain he didn't think fondly of us. However, what he thought of us didn't matter.

'He's going to tell us in the end.'

I guarantee that Max wouldn't be able to stop the mess the expedition party had made and seeing that he still hadn't appeared before us, I was sure he was focused on something else. If we found the management room and faced him, we would likely have the advantage.

'Or we can just kill him… '

Manager Max was actually the hidden named monster of this dungeon, and the sound of his cries had to be beautiful.

As I nodded my head while thinking about a happy situation, I heard Kim Hyun-Sung wrapping things up.

'Good thing I did that.'

I thought it was a good thing I was being considerate of the guy that might lose his position in this expedition. I guess he really was skilled because I saw how he immediately took control of the situation as soon as I created an opportunity for him. Since I had relieved the tension, it was his job to keep everyone on their toes.

"We may be safe now, but we have to stay on our toes. Even if the fragment is in a resting period, this dungeon is still dangerous. There could be other programs protecting the museum on our way to the management room and there's a chance that monsters affected by the fragment could awaken as well."

"…"

"Even if we find the management room, it won't resolve everything. We don't know

much about the museum and although we're resting right now, we still have to capture the dungeon," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

That was when I thought maybe he was overdoing it…

"And…" he paused.

"…"

"Resting is a necessary task during a dungeon capture. We'll leave in four hours. Everyone, please recover as much as you can. I'd like to return to Lindel without any deaths," he added.

I guess he had also been in many dungeons like this one in his past life.

I noticed the nervous expressions on the party members' faces.

'Nice.'

Even if I said the same thing he said, it would be difficult to give them the kind of confidence Kim Hyun-Sung was giving them. I didn't like saying this, but one's appearance was an important factor when trying to give confidence to others. His handsome face was suitable for social events like this, and I really liked how that was the case.

When I glanced to the side, I noticed Park Yeon-Joo, Jo Hye-Jin, and even some of the Black Swan Guild members staring at him strangely. I had read a post on the Internet about the kind of reaction women often showed when looking at a handsome man, but the reaction they were currently showing was much more intense than that post.

'They've fallen for him.'

I was really shocked because their eyes were sparkling despite his ordinary speech.

Anyway, everyone followed Kim Hyun-Sung's order and started resting. We were originally going to rest for four hours and then leave, but I guess even Kim Hyun-Sung thought it would be okay to take it easy. It meant that he would be able to perfectly recover in four hours. I was relieved because I had been suppressing my sleepiness.

'I think I'll be able to sleep well… '

Those in desperate need of recovery like me started setting up their camps, and they slept after finding a decent place to sleep. Meanwhile, the others were resting in their own way.

I was greeted by a reasonably comfortable space when I entered a small tent and naturally, my anxiousness melted away like snow. I was relieved, but Dialugia couldn't rest properly because she wasn't comfortable with what she had done.

'Tsk… '

I noticed Dialugia mumbling to herself from a distance, which was unlike herself.

"For Dialuria…"

"…"

"It was for my dear daughter. Mother… Grandmother, I'm sorry."

I felt guilty, but it couldn't be helped.

"It was for Dialuria. *Heuk*."

I thought I would have a hard time falling asleep because I felt really guilty when I heard her faint voice, but the moment I closed my eyes, I fell into a sweet slumber.

'I'm trash.'

I couldn't help but question my humanity again, but…

Honestly…

The sleep was so sweet.

CHAPTER 245
MAX, THE MUSEUM MANAGER (1)

"Wake up, oppa," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"*Ugh*…" I moaned.

"They said we're going to leave soon," she added.

"Okay…" I mumbled.

When I opened my eyes slowly, I saw Jung Ha-Yan's face before the ceiling. I was surprised because she was so close that I could feel her breath, but I wasn't agitated.

'I've gotten used to it.'

The way she examined me slowly with her big eyes was a sight I often saw and when I got up slowly, she took a step back. When I rubbed my eyes lightly, I started waking up.

'I feel tired for some reason… '

Despite sleeping for a long time, I was still tired. My whole body felt stiff and I was tired. However, I wasn't too tired because my mana, which had been almost fully exhausted had recovered. I guess if your magic stat was high, your mana recovery rate would increase as well because Jung Ha-Yan looked energetic and her face was glistening.

When I looked up, I saw Jung Ha-Yan observing me from a few steps behind. When I asked a question, she answered right away.

"How long was I asleep?"

"About three hours and 40 minutes."

"You should've woken me up sooner," I commented.

“Y-You were sound asleep, so I didn’t… I’m sorry,” Jung Ha-Yan apologized.

“You don’t have to apologize,” I told her.

“D-Do you want me to help you wash up?” she offered.

“*Ah*, sure. Thanks,” I replied.

Obviously, Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t actually washing me. When she cast a spell, my face felt moisturized. Magic was very convenient even in everyday life. I did feel kind of uncomfortable because I wasn’t washing my face myself, but I was grateful that we could do this in a dungeon.

While I was gathering my belongings, the expedition members were already cleaning up the camp, so I didn’t need to give them any orders, but the veterans were moving relatively slower than the others.

‘It’s tough… ’

The majority of the Black Swan Guild members here were veterans. Basically, the members participating in this expedition were close to each other. Despite that, some of the members were moving busily, which meant that they had recently joined the guild.

‘I’m sure it’s hell.’

Even on Earth, the hierarchy among nurses was pretty strict although it probably wasn’t like this…

‘It’s probably worse here.’

Because you could die if you make a mistake. If anything, this place was worse than Earth.

While I was having a somewhat ridiculous thought, I heard a voice next to me.

“You’re awake, Mr. Ki-Young.”

It was our lovely Kim Hyun-Sung.

“Sorry, I’m late,” I apologized.

“It’s fine since our break time was four hours. I was going to wake you up right before leaving, but Miss Ha-Yan was already inside your tent… How are you feeling?” he asked.

‘How admirable.’

I was proud that he was thinking about me, and I was sure he knew I suffered injuries. Park Yeon-Joo and Kim Hyun-Sung had sustained more damage than I did, but since my body was weak, I felt fatigued when I almost exhausted my mana.

“Would it be okay if I held your hand?” he asked.

“*Ah*… sure. Of course,” I answered.

As soon as he said that, I felt like my eyes were strangely focused on something. Even the Black Swan Guild members stopped what they were doing and looked at us.

‘I think I know what they’re thinking… ’

There had been a similar situation last time. Some of them gulped while others looked at us with warm smiles. There were some who either gasped or quietly screamed, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t seem to care.

‘This bastard… ’

He seemed like he was doing his best in examining the condition of my mana as he quietly closed his eyes. When looking at us from far away, I guess we looked pretty affectionate.

“You seem fine,” he said.

“I still haven’t completely recovered, but I was able to rest properly thanks to you,” I told him.

“I’m glad, Mr. Ki-Young.”

‘Stop smiling like that, man.’

He was showing me a smile he didn't even show to Park Yeon-Joo, and I felt nervous about it, as it seemed like the others were misunderstanding the situation even more. Now that I thought about it, I was starting to get suspicious of the *How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves* book. I thought it was an ordinary novel, but seeing that the ones exclaiming right now were the same people reading the book hours ago, my suspicion that started as a drizzle began to turn into a flood.

'Shit… '

I had to read the book once I returned to Lindel.

Anyway, apart from this small incident, the expedition preparations were going well. The expedition members of the Black Swan Guild started moving even faster. They reminded me of soldiers who watched shows the girl groups would put on.

Unlike my assumption that we were going to be somewhat late, I was at a loss for words by how fast they cleaned everything up and even Park Yeon-Joo tilted her head in confusion. The guild members seemed energetic. Park Yeon-Joo did mention how having men in the party was a nice change of pace, but I was sure this energy wasn't coming from the reason she was thinking about.

"Let's head out. As I've mentioned before, our destination is the management room and we'll move by following the fragment's tentacles. Please check and make sure that we won't leave anything behind and please be careful not to touch the tentacles while we're moving. We could run into some problems, so I want the mages to take turns casting shield spells," Kim Hyun-Sung ordered.

"Okay."

"Since we spent a lot of time recovering, we'll move as fast as possible. Mr. Hyun-Sung will be at the front, so please move as fast as you can while following him," Park Yeon-Joo added.

"Okay, Guild Master."

After the short briefing, the party started walking and if there was one thing that changed, it was the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung was moving really fast. In this type of march, rangers specializing in recon and disabling traps were usually the ones who would lead the party. In the Blue Guild, Kim Ye-Ri, the tracker, was part of that job group, and naturally, there were more than three rangers in our party. The fact that

Kim Hyun-Sung volunteered to take the lead meant he was confident that he could do better than the ranged members. I thought if you were an influential person, anything was possible, but that wasn't the case. Even if you had a similar job, everyone had their own tasks to fulfill. For example, Cha Hee-Ra could never do the tasks the ranged members were doing and if anything, she would just destroy the traps she found.

At first, the ranged members looked at Kim Hyun-Sung unfavorably, but once the march started, they looked at him with their mouths open. When I saw their reaction, I received an answer.

'Did he have a ranged job in his past life?'

Obviously, I thought he was a swordsman in his past life, but it was possible that he actually chose a ranged job.

'Did he take the same growth route as Kim Ye-Ri?'

Otherwise, his actions could only be the result of having a lot of experience. Personally, I assumed he started off as a swordsman, but of course, it didn't matter what kind of job he had in his past life. Seeing Kim Hyun-Sung acting as the party's guide while running made me worried that I might jizz my pants because of how easily he was leading us.

"I don't think there are any traps. We'll move even faster," Kim Hyun-Sung announced.

"Got it."

"I see multiple golems in the front. I've taken care of it," he said.

"Understood."

"There's a monster above epic rank. It appears to have escaped the influence of the system," he said.

"Prepare for battle."

"It's been taken care of."

The most beautiful part was that the recon and killing of the monsters were all done at the same time. Epic-ranked monsters were taken care of immediately. We could be considered unlucky if we ran into a legendary-ranked monster, but I didn't know whether Kim Hyun-Sung was avoiding them or if we *really* weren't running into them. As we continued following him, the only thing we saw were dead monsters. Considering the fact that he had even severed the heads of such big monsters, I guess the mythic-ranked sword he had acquired was truly a massive help.

Thanks to him, the rangers felt an indescribable sense of shame, but there was no reason for me to be worried about their feelings.

'We're fast!'

The expedition party was moving faster than I had imagined and it felt like we were doing an ordinary race rather than a dungeon exploration. The scenery kept changing and the objects we saw were changing as well. We started seeing narrow roads and golems instead of large rooms, destroyed exhibition halls, and items. Not only that, but the tentacles embedded in the ground or wrapped around the pillars were becoming thinner, which meant we were near the end, and naturally, I thought we were getting closer to the management room.

Not long after, we saw the end of the tentacles, and Kim Hyun-Sung didn't stop as he immediately cut through the wall with his sword. We were at the end of the road, but we walked toward the place where we could feel the flow of mana.

Considering the size of the museum and the dangerous elements the dungeon had, we assumed it would take us a day to arrive, at most. The fact that we arrived here in less than six hours was something that not even Max—who was moving clumsily while watching a large screen—had expected.

- N-No!

[Error]

[The main program isn't working.]

- W-Why is the main program not working? Is it already getting weaker? N-No… not like this.

[Error]

[The main program isn't working.]

- I need to reserve the backup program at the least. It'll be over if it breaks through this. I should reroute the spare mana that was going to be used for the main program. That's the right thing to do. The museum will probably get destroyed, but… I need, I need to protect the continent. It's the task the Rift Guardians left me. I can't give up like this. *Ugh*…

[Infuse the backup program with mana.]

We entered with great determination, thinking that we would have to fight, but what we saw was a sight to see. A kid with blond hair was moving around clumsily while controlling a device made composed of magic circles. The kid didn't even notice our entry.

'Maybe he's just that occupied… '

It was understandable. The Fragment of the Ancient God we were seeing in the large hologram made up of mana seemed like it had been captured by a blue mana, and the monster was obviously trying to break free from it. As expected, the backup program and the Fragment of the Ancient God were fighting each other.

It looked terrifying even when looking at it through a screen. It was a relief that we were here rather than over there.

- I must seal it no matter what.

We couldn't even talk to him. When we took a step forward, he must have realized that the expedition party had arrived because I noticed him turning his head toward us.

- How… could you…

I thought the boy was like a machine, but his main body did have emotions. His expression asked *'Why?'* first, and then it was followed by shock, then fear. However, it was a surprise that the last emotion he displayed was an unknown sense of responsibility. He started yelling as he held on to the device made of magic circles.

- N-No! Y-You pieces of shit! You're just tools for the dirty Ancient God! Do you really think I'm just going to let you destroy the continent?!

‘We’re not the bad guys, you bastard.’

The tables had turned; there was no mistaking it.

Author's Comment:

Max: I need to save the continent! The continent… I must save it!

CHAPTER 246
MAX, THE MUSEUM MANAGER (2)

Max obviously looked nervous and I could tell the misunderstanding he was having from the expression he was wearing. His eyebrows were shaking and he was having all kinds of negative thoughts. I guess he thought I was going to break that control device because he was desperately trying to block it as if it was something precious. He made the right decision. Right now, I wanted that seal to be maintained, but if something went wrong, I could end up breaking that device. Still, the person who had something to protect was weak. I wasn't sure whether it was right to call him a person or not, but I was satisfied by the fact that he was nervous.

'How interesting.'

It wasn't just him. This entire room was filled with interesting things and to be honest, the moment I entered this room, my interest in Max had significantly decreased.

'This is a treasure.'

The hologram made out of mana was the most impressive. Naturally, I was impressed by it because this world had neither videos nor recorders. When I looked at the shining magic circles all over the room, I understood roughly how they worked.

'I probably can't make the same ones if someone asked… '

But I could use what was here at the least.

'Will I need authority for it?'

When I checked with Mind's Eye, I could see information regarding it.

[Rift Museum Control System - Legendary Rank]

[Requires administrator rights.]

'I knew it… '

It was a bit unfortunate, but other than that, there were interesting artifacts. Naturally, I looked around because the technology to control this museum was here and I guess Max was threatened by my actions.

- I'm not… I'm not going to let it go your way no matter what.

'It's… '

It was how he was still misunderstanding us, but his appearance was actually cute. I thought I had a good idea of what the Rift Guardians liked. The blond boy looked like he would easily break and honestly, the power I felt from him wasn't that great. The expedition party did prepare for battle, but that was only in case of an emergency. To be honest, there wasn't a need for us to put up our guards like this. Unlike the party who thought there could be potential threats here, I didn't see any threats. The golems outside were the only monsters protecting this management room and Max was probably, at most, an epic-ranked monster. Basically, he wasn't a threat, and even though I didn't have this thought when I saw the dummy, I sensed that he was a pushover after seeing his main body.

Naturally, I walked through the expedition party and spoke to Max with a smile.

"Wow, look who it is. It's the successor Max, who manages and guards the Rift Museum."

- You… you!

"I'll be sad if you get mad at me like that, Manager. It does feel kind of different talking to you face to face like this. So, you're a kid in real life, too. If you're not busy, how about we chat?" I suggested.

- You… piece of shit! Piece of shit! You bastard!

"I don't understand why you're so angry."

- You're just the dirty Ancient God's pawn! I-I won't let you have your way!

"I'm not sure why you think we're the Ancient God's pawn, but… *ahem*. I'd like to apologize for further complicating the situation, but we had no choice. You're the one who rigged the wheel and although I don't know much about the museum exploration, we had no choice but to do that to survive," I explained.

- S-Shut that dirty mouth of yours! I have never rigged the rat[1]—

"I have a few questions for you…" I interrupted.

- You dirty humans! I shouldn't have accepted you as guests.

"Why are you being difficult when all I want to do is have a chat with you?" I asked.

- G-Get out this instant! Right now! W-Where are the g-golem guards…

"We already took care of the useless rocks. Calm down and let's just talk…"

- *Eeeeek!*

If there was one problem, it was the fact that I was having a hard time talking to him. If I could, I would have transformed that manager into the hidden boss and started the Max raid, but it was better not to fight.

'We shouldn't fight… nothing good will come out of it.'

Obviously, no one wanted the treasures in front of us to go to waste and the value of the various devices included in the museum control system was astronomical. Depending on how we used it, we may acquire something even more valuable than Kim Hyun-Sung's mythic-ranked sword. Actually, the museum control system would be even more valuable than Durandal. I didn't think the expedition members had considered that just yet, as there were too many things going on, but if they saw what I had seen through Mind's Eye, I was sure they would think the same way.

'At least to me, that system is a treasure.'

It was to the point that I started thinking about if there was something I desperately wanted even more than the museum's control system after arriving here.

In the end, I had no choice but to talk to Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo.

“I’m sorry to ask this, but I’d like to negotiate with the museum manager… Could you leave that to me?”

As soon as I spoke, I heard Max blabbering on about something, but I ignored him and continued talking, “I think it’ll be more effective if it’s just the two of us instead of the whole party. Please let me do it.”

“You don’t think it’ll be dangerous?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“*Ah!* I think it’ll be fine if Dialugia comes with me and I believe I’ll be able to get a satisfactory result. It’ll be good for both the Blue and Black Swan Guild as long as the Black Swan gives me the permission…” I answered.

“I’m fine with that.”

I expected Kim Hyun-Sung to give that kind of answer from the start, so the problem was with Park Yeon-Joo.

‘I think she caught on… ’

“I’ll be sure to tell you the location of the trapped members within 10 minutes,” I added.

I was sure Park Yeon-Joo was thinking carefully about this. I wasn’t sure what kind of conclusion she had arrived at, but I guess she had decided to leave it to me because she nodded in response. She may have come to this decision, as she didn’t have anything up her sleeve, but I was happy that she was trusting me.

“I’ll leave it up to you,” she said.

‘This is why a person’s usual behavior is important.’

It didn’t really fit me, but publicly, Lee Ki-Young had a well-built image and I was able to confirm that once again.

Everyone slowly started to leave the management room and the uncomfortable Dialugia sat next to me. Finally, we now had a place where we could talk comfortably.

- Negotiate? Negotiate? Do you really think I'll do something like that with you? G-Go away this instant!

I expected Max to make a fuss, but I didn't really care.

When I spoke after taking a deep breath, he looked anxious. I guess he didn't know how to react to my sudden change in attitude.

"Look…" I started.

- Huh?

"You really have no idea what's going on?" I asked.

- What…

"It seems that the Rift Guardians have planted a sense of responsibility in you, but they must have forgotten to make you quick-witted," I added.

- I don't understand what you're saying…

"Please shut up and listen to me, Manager. You've been blabbering about protecting the continent and whatnot, but I'm sure you don't want that seal to shatter, right?" I asked.

- What?

"*Ah*, how about you push your strange misunderstandings into one side of your brain that's made out of mana because I'm not the Ancient's God pawn or whatever you think I am. The only reason we broke the seal was that it was the only way we could survive. There's no other reason behind it, but I'm happy because it turned out well," I explained.

- Stop talking nonsense… right now!

Max was trying to say something, but I obviously didn't want to hear him scream again, so I continued.

"If that breaks free… I heard the continent is going to be destroyed."

Max remained quiet.

“I heard it from my wife. Isn’t that right, Dialugia? That monster is going to slowly absorb the life of this continent and get stronger… and that’ll probably take about… 30,000 years, right?” I asked.

- It’s actually a bit shor—

“You seem to feel a great sense of responsibility for this continent, but that’s not the case for me. Whether the world ends or not in 30,000 years, it has nothing to do with me. The future generation will create their own future, and I’m sure they’ll fix all this,” I interrupted.

- H-How dare you say that?

“Is this a hologram made of mana? The great and dignified Fragment of the Ancient God being displayed in the hologram right now is, *pfft!* I think it’s trying its best to shake off the backup program or whatever… *Huh*? Unless my eyes are deceiving me, the balance of power seems pretty tight…” I pointed out.

- *Uh*…

“You’ve seen this before, right? What do you think will happen if this potion blows up in this place? What will happen if one of those control panels breaks and the mana feeding the backup program is disconnected?” I asked.

- D-Do you think I’ll let you do—

“Hey, don’t get all worked up, Max. Dialugia, subdue him,” I ordered.

Max was definitely surprised because he hurriedly ran toward me with his hand out. However, Dialugia grabbed his hand, and I saw him struggling while being suppressed.

- *Ee… eeeek!* Let go of me! Let go!

“I-I’m sorry…” Dialugia apologized.

- I don’t know about the other humans, but you shouldn’t be doing this! As the one that protects the balance of this continent, you shouldn’t participate in something

like this! You! You're a dragon! Do you have any idea what you're doing?!

"I-I'm sorry…" she apologized again.

- We need to protect the continent! If you're part of the proud dragon race, then that piece of shit… You should do it for the continent!

"I'm sorry…" she repeated.

- N-No way… it can't end like this! Not like this!

Guilt was written all over Dialugia's face and for some reason, it seemed like she was blaming herself a little too much.

Of course, I didn't want that monster to break free and as I mentioned before, it didn't matter to me if it broke free or became active, but it would make me feel more comfortable if it remained quiet. But right now, I had to maintain this attitude.

'It's great.'

I hadn't even thought about using the continent as bait, but his reaction was so good that I started to get a bit excited.

"I'm sure it'll be worth watching. Indeed! I'm sure the Rift Guardians will jump out of their graves! Now, let's use the bomb," I said.

- Stop! S-Stop it!

"It looks pretty sturdy so I should probably use more than one… Once I insert my mana into it, it'll go *boom!* in two seconds. The continent will be destroyed!" I shouted.

- Stop! Stop it!

"Hey! You need to speak respectfully to your elders!" I ordered.

- Please stop it!

"Actually, it's better to break it with my hands than with a bomb. Is there a decent stick around here?" I asked.

- *Kgggggh…*

When I started swinging a stick in the air after grabbing it, Max started to look even more anxious. To be honest, it was impossible to break a control panel with this stick, but there wasn't anything that could make him feel more anxious than an armed protest. It was funny how his eyes quivered every time I swung the stick toward the control panels and naturally, I swung the stick even higher to create an even more dramatic situation.

"Now, the continent will be destroyed in five seconds. *Clap, clap, clap!*" I announced.

- N-No!

"Five*!*"

- Please don't do this!

"Four!"

At this point, Dialugia had to be nervous because she spoke urgently.

"Are you really going to do that? Really?!"

- Proud dragon! Hurry!!!

"Three!"

- N-No!

"Two!"

- *Ugggh!*

"Here we go!"

- Wh-What do you want?!

When I was about to start beating a control panel, Max quickly started talking. I guess he recalled the word—negotiation—I had mentioned earlier and luckily, I was looking for an answer. Naturally, I smiled and when I spoke quietly, I saw how his

eyes quivered.

“The museum,” I replied.

Even I thought I sounded pretty determined.

- What?

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1. Rates, not an actual rat xD ☜

CHAPTER 247
MAX, THE MUSEUM MANAGER (3)

“Stop acting like you didn’t hear me… I said the museum,” I repeated myself.

- *Uh*… what?

“This museum. Hand it over,” I said.

- Wh-What are you talking about?

“Let’s manage this museum together. I don’t really have any other goals…” I replied.

- E-Even if you become the manager, the system won’t allow you to take the objects that are stored here. It’s not allowed.

“I know. I noticed a few items still being protected by the system on our way here. Complete the exploration to obtain a reward. That’s the rule here. I already know that we can’t break that rule. What I need isn’t an item. *Ah!* Before I forget, tell me where the trapped members are,” I requested.

-…

“By the way, don’t even think about making a ridiculous trade with those guys. If something goes wrong, I will break everything here. Witnessing the continent’s destruction will break my heart, so don’t make me walk down the wrong path, okay? I’m a gentle and nice person,” I warned.

Max rolled his eyes when I asked about the trapped members, but I had no choice but to speak harshly. He probably thought it would be a good idea to negotiate with those people.

‘It’s no use.’

When thinking about the Black Swan Guild, rescuing the trapped members was important, but it wasn’t as important as this task, and I had to be clear that I wasn’t

going to make a deal with the trapped members. It was important to instill the image of a psycho to the point that I would really destroy everything if I get upset.

- But… that's…

"You seem kind of uncomfortable." I pointed out.

- *Uh…*

"It seems like I've made Max uncomfortable. Am I right?" I asked.

- No, that's not…

Naturally, I widened my eyes and when I maintained the same expression that Jung Ha-Yan had when she was angry, Max looked at me as if I was a psycho. He did think of me as a crazy person earlier, but now, it was much more obvious.

"I guess my request was too much for you. I almost made a *very* big mistake. Don't you agree, Dialugia?" I asked.

"That's…"

"I guess you agree! I really did make Max uncomfortable! It's my fault! It's the disgraceful mortal's fault! I can't believe I made the museum manager and guardian of the rift angry! I made a huge mistake!' I yelled.

I started hitting the wall next to me with the stick as if I was angry.

Crack! Boom!

I wasn't really strong. My arms were sore and even though the wall didn't break, what I had done was effective.

"Don't do anything! Don't manage the museum! Don't explore! Don't even seal the monster! Don't do anything!" I shouted again.

Crack!

Boom!

It was tiring since I was doing it by myself and it was then that I thought I needed someone to play along with me. I wanted to call for Ahn Ki-Mo or Park Deok-Gu, but after seeing Dialugia's expression, I realized I didn't need help from the people outside. It was because her expression wasn't any different from Max's, she was looking at me as if I was really a psychopath.

'This is called acting, my wife. Don't misunderstand… '

Dialugia looked anxious and concerned as she looked at me as if she couldn't believe I was the father of her child. I questioned if I was the reason why Dialugia had been acting strange recently and even though I wanted to clear up the misunderstanding, I had to maintain this act because of the blond-haired boy. Max had also started to realize that this wasn't an act when he saw Dialugia's face.

Honestly, I was out of breath and when I started breathing hard, Max looked at me with quivering eyes along with Dialugia. I thought maybe I looked a bit lethargic, but to them, I had to look like a crazy guy who couldn't contain his excitement. However, I didn't feel bad.

"*Whoo… whoo… whoo…*"

-…

"Have you heard of this saying, Max?" I asked.

- What… kind…

"If you continue to show kindness… people will think they're entitled to it… What I'm trying to say is that I'm being very kind to you right now, Mr. Manager. It's a really good deal. It's an ending where everyone can be happy…" I replied.

Dialugia suddenly spoke, "Accept it."

- Y-You too…

"Hurry. That human is serious," she added.

It was really amusing seeing Max trying to suppress his words. Dialugia's words had *definitely* been really believable because I noticed him looking at the museum control system and me. Honestly, Dialugia's support was more effective than my sudden

actions. Since she prayed for this continent's safety, she wanted Max to accept my deal. I wasn't sure if she had recalled the time when I held Smartie hostage, but she looked like she was truly disgusted with me.

'I really was a shitty person back then… '

I could only comfort myself by telling myself that I had become a better person.

"*Whoo… whoo…*"

"H-Hurry up and accept it. I know that human's nature very well. If you accept, nothing will happen. I promise you that," Dialugia told him.

- You don't need to…

"Even though I was forced into this position, I also don't want to see the continent's destruction. I really don't…" she added.

- *Ughhhh…*

Max looked like an actual victim as he shed large drops of tears while being suppressed by Dialugia. I felt kind of bad, but I had no other choice.

"You don't have much time to choose, Mr. Max. Please don't test my patience," I warned him again.

In the end, he nodded while trembling.

'I did it.'

I guess he had the authority to bring in another manager. I thought he was going to say there wasn't a way to do that, but I guess he thought he had no other choice.

The museum itself had stopped almost all of its functions. Since the mana reserved for the main program was being used for the backup program, it was hard to say if it was possible to maintain the dungeon like before.

'I do feel bad.'

His lovely nest got destroyed because he let the wrong person in. The exhibition

halls he was proud of were now in ruins, while the majority of the items on display there had been destroyed. I remember how Max confidently showed off the collection the museum had on the first day we entered. The museum he was proud of had become a dumping ground. To Max, I was sure I was akin to a plague.

It was amusing how he was crying with his hands trembling while biting his lips. Dialugia looked at him pitifully as she let go of the hand holding him down and when he tapped on a few buttons on a magic circle, a system message appeared before me.

[The Rift Museum's Grade 5 Manager, Max, has offered the Rift Museum's manager position.]

[Would you like to accept? Your job will not change. A title will be created upon accepting the role.]

[Rift Museum Grade 5 Manager]

[You can view the information available to the Rift Museum's Grade 5 Manager. The Grade 5 Manager's basic permissions are available for use.]

'Not bad.'

I looked through it slowly, but I didn't find any issues. It wasn't like a slave contract and it definitely wasn't like the time with Dialugia where I had to share my life with someone. What I liked the most was that I could start it without feeling any kind of pressure.

'So, this is like a title… '

I was thinking about declining it if I had to change jobs, but if it meant a title was going to be created, I was willing to accept it. When I accepted, another message appeared.

[A title has been created.]

[Rift Museum Grade 5 Manager]

[Your magic stat will increase by 1.]

'Nice!'

I wanted to scream when I heard the good news and as expected, it gave me a title. Even though it only increased my stat by one point, I was grateful because I couldn't increase my magic stat anymore.

The authority and responsibility of the Rift Museum's manager were written, but I didn't read the details because Max was going to take care of the responsibilities, anyway. I just needed the authority. However, an immense amount of information started to fill my head and I felt a throbbing headache as a result.

'Huh?'

The most interesting part was that the control system I couldn't read with Mind's Eye was now available to me. I wasn't sure if it was because I had become a Grade 5 manager, but I was able to use Mind's Eye to see its detailed information. Not only were there simple explanations, but I could see the operation method and the manual. It was so well-written that I felt like someone was asking me to fix all this.

'Still… it won't be an easy task… '

When looking at the situation from the manager's point of view, I became even more aware of the gravity of the situation. If I really did hit even one of the control panels with the stick, then the museum would have really collapsed.

'I can fix it.'

While I was nodding, I noticed Max talking to himself while crying.

- *Kghhhhh.* The museum is finished… completely finished… Guardian… Guardian Metel… I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

“Why are you crying again, Mr. Manager? You should be happy to have a co-worker…” I said.

- *Gaaaaah… kghhh…*

“Hey, move over and deliver the location of the trapped members to the expedition party waiting outside,” I ordered.

- W-What are you up to now?!

“What do you mean? It’s my museum now. I’m obviously going to fix the issue with that Fragment of the Ancient God running rampant,” I answered.

- Wait! Don’t touch that!

“Just step aside. I’m not sure if it’s going to work since it’s my first time, but I have an idea of what I have to do,” I explained.

- You know nothing!

“Is this how you’re supposed to do it? Wait, why do you keep talking informally to me, *huh?*” I asked.

- Y-You know nothing, sir.

“I’m not sure what I know either. I only know because I’m looking at them with my eyes. Can’t you see them?” I asked.

- I don’t see anything… ’

“The way you’re managing the museum is a mess because that’s all you’re capable of doing. *Tsk*,” I told him.

-…

“The museum is in this state and yet you haven’t used Zone Four’s reserve forces? It’s even written in the manual…” I pointed out.

- Huh?

“The main program is just down, not damaged… It’s a good thing you didn’t use all of the mana on the backup program. *Huh*? Why do you still have the dummy when you’re not even using it? Release it right now so that we can turn that into mana as well. We need all the mana we can get,” I ordered.

Max was being kind of bothersome while working.

“Move over. Also, cut off the mana supply going into the displayed items being maintained by the main power. It’s better to save some of them… If this continued, the seal would have completely shattered even before I started destroying the place,” I explained.

- *Huuuuuuh?*

“Wow… this could’ve been really bad. Dialugia, the trapped Black Swan Guild members are in Zone Five, District 32. They seem to be in better condition than I thought so please tell them not to worry and guide them there. Also, Mr. Max[1],” I called out.

When I called out his name, he looked nervous.

- Yes? I-Is there anything I can… help you with? What should I do? I can stay beside you and support you!

“Make me coffee,” I interrupted.

It was then that the feeling of wanting to protect this continent by sacrificing myself started to grow in my heart.

[Legendary-Ranked Forced Quest will be activated.]

[Legendary-Ranked Quest - Continental Salvation (0/1)]

[Reward - (Title) Continent Guardian]

[Continent Guardian]

[A title given to the expedition members who prevented the collapse of the continent. All stats will be permanently increased by 1 point.]

Firewood was added to the brazier.

'It's unacceptable to destroy the continent where the precious future generation will live.'

My change in attitude was like someone had drawn over it.

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1. LKY is calling him Mr. Max as if he's an employee working for a company ☜

CHAPTER 248
MAX, THE MUSEUM MANAGER (4)

I didn't think I was the only one who had received the quest. Since the title would be given to the expedition members who had successfully protected the continent, I was sure the party had already received the news as well. As I expected, the expedition party members entered the management room a few moments later. With Park Yeon-Joo and Kim Hyun-Sung at the front, Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu entered, while Sun Hee-Young and Ahn Ki-Mo took a seat on one side of the room with the other Black Swan Guild members. I guess they managed to rescue the trapped members because I saw unfamiliar faces with them.

'They look better than I thought.'

I somewhat expected it because from the start, Max had never been a named monster, but a clump of mana categorized as the dungeon guide. He was nothing more than a manager, so there was no need for him to persecute them.

'He's also a pushover... '

Anyway, when the party entered, they looked surprised, and they looked at me as if asking what I was doing here. Even I was surprised by my current situation, so their reaction was understandable. Not only was I skillfully controlling the devices I had seen for the first time, but I was drinking the coffee Max had actually made for me, so I was sure they couldn't understand the situation, as it had become completely different from before. I was sure they wanted an explanation and Park Yeon-Joo was the first person to speak up.

"What's… going on?"

"We made a deal. He said he would fix the Fragment of the Ancient God's seal," I answered.

"I-I see. The devices…"

"I don't know much about it, but the system is fairly easy to understand. When I first

saw it, I had an idea as to how it worked, which is why I offered a trade. I saw a few error messages popping up. And I'm pretty good at handling machines as well…" I explained.

"I don't think being good at handling machines explains how you're using the system," she said.

Her voice was filled with doubt, but I couldn't tell her that I had become familiar with the system because of Mind's Eye. Our lovely regressor was also surprised, but not long after, he looked proud and started looking at me again as if I was some kind of treasure. Kim Hyun-Sung didn't express it openly, but that was when I heard Park Deok-Gu's loud voice.

"Our hyung-nim is a genius! Our hyung-nim is the best!"

"It's nothing like that," I said.

"You're telling us that you didn't know how to operate it, but after one look—you could already operate it after just one look!" he added.

"…"

To be exact, I had a good eye rather than being smart. There was a saying that it was about the destination, not the journey,[1] so when only looking at the result, I may seem like a genius, but if I didn't have Mind's Eye, I wouldn't have been able to do anything.

Park Deok-Gu's words may have incited the expedition members, but the Black Swan Guild members seemed like they had recognized me as a genius. Some of them must have recalled how perfect our formation was before we left for the expedition because I noticed some of them nodding in response to Park Deok-Gu's words.

Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung felt proud once again and because of the strange looks some of the Black Swan Guild members were giving me, Jung Ha-Yan was becoming wary of her surroundings again. I wanted to enjoy my time with them, but I couldn't afford to do that.

'I'm busy.'

Maintaining the seal on the monster didn't end with just filling the backup program

with mana. For the main protection device, the task the Rift Guardians had assigned caused the system to move on its own, but the backup program required someone to manually control it for the system to maintain the seal. I understood why Max wasn't able to do anything else other than to hold on to this device.

'I need to hold it down.'

The dirty Fragment of the Ancient God still wasn't completely sealed. Not only was it wiggling around, but it was still trying to break free from the backup system. On the screen, the blue mana looked like it was simply tying down the monster, but this task was more complicated than I thought. I had to keep inserting mana into the hole being drilled, and I also had to keep putting pressure on the side the monster was using its strength on. It felt like I was playing a video game—a defense game, but to be exact, I was playing a game where I had to dodge bullets.

'In this case, it may be more accurate to say that I had to have the plane defend us from the bullets by having them hit the plane… '

Obviously, I couldn't compare the controls to a one-dimensional game.

'That's why the difficulty is increasing… '

Basically, I couldn't handle this while doing other tasks.

Maybe it was because of my serious face and my fast-moving hands, but the loud atmosphere soon died down. Moments later, all I heard was the sound of the magic circles moving and even Max was watching the monitor anxiously. Anyone could see that things weren't going well and I actually felt like I needed more hands. That was when Kim Hyun-Sung started talking.

"Is there anything I can help you with?"

'You're the only one who cares about me.'

"*Hm*… there is something. I'm sure it'll make this a lot easier," I replied.

I was actually thinking about asking for help.

"Max, take care of this for me. Don't insert mana into useless places… I won't take long so maintain it as much as you can," I ordered.

- Understood!

When I stood up, Max immediately sat in my seat and started controlling the magic circles. When I turned my head, I saw the expedition members looking at me and after I showed them a hologram made from mana, I started going over the situation.

“I’ll give a concise and quick explanation of the situation,” I started.

“Okay…”

When I was about to continue, Park Yeon-Joo asked a question and naturally, it wasn’t a difficult question to answer. I just had to cover up the setting Dialugia and I had created when we lied to the party.

“Excuse me. If you don’t mind, could I ask a question, Mr. Ki-Young?”

“Go ahead,” I answered.

“Before that… didn’t you say that the Fragment of the Ancient God was in a resting period?” she asked.

“Yes, it definitely *was* in a resting period. Dialugia came to that conclusion and after talking to Max, he said the same thing,” I replied.

Of course, it was a lie.

“We were trying to reseal the Fragment of the Ancient God while it was in its resting period in the museum, but after noticing the backup program’s activity, it started resisting the program and we’re currently in that situation. I’d like to explain a little more in detail, but I don’t have much time…” I added.

“*Oh*, I’m sorry,” she apologized.

“It’s fine. I’m sure it seemed suspicious. As you can see, almost all parts of the monster are now sealed, but rifts have started to appear on the seals. What Max is doing right now is covering the holes using the mana from the backup program,” I continued.

“*Hm*…”

“Thankfully, we managed to gather mana from other places, and we are able to maintain the status quo, but I believe we need to come up with a different method to hold down the monster since it’ll just keep on fighting the system. We also need people who can handle unexpected situations,” I explained.

“I see…”

“One thing I can say with confidence is that I wouldn’t have asked for your help if I thought this was going to be a dangerous task, but that doesn’t mean it’s not going to be dangerous at all…” I said.

“You’re saying it’s not dangerous enough for us to lose our lives.” Park Yeon-Joo pointed out.

“No, I’m going to prevent all of you from getting in dangerous situations by using the backup program here,” I answered.

“I think I understand… what you’re talking about,” she said.

“If I think the situation isn’t improving, then not only will I ask you to retreat, but I’ll consider your safety as the top priority,” I told them.

“And if the seal breaks…”

“We’re the ones who broke the seal in the first place, but I’m sure there’s a way to fix it,” I reminded them.

There wasn’t a way to fix it. If the seal broke, then we would just have to wait 30,000 years for the continent’s collapse. To be honest, I didn’t give a shit about the continent’s survival. However, although it had nothing to do with me, the fact that I could lose something from this broke my heart.

‘My museum… ’

I wouldn’t be able to use these control devices again. The museum’s destruction would result in the destruction of the backup program in the management room and all the functions in this location would shut down, turning this place into a dumping ground.

‘If possible, it would be better to repair the seal.’

I continued talking while nodding, but this time, I spoke with a more serious tone.

“We’ll move with the expedition party’s survival as our top priority.”

“Okay, I understand.”

“I feel relieved hearing you say that,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“Alright…”

“*Ahem*. Also, I know it’s strange for me to bring this up, but…” I paused.

“What is it?”

“I’m sure all of you have received a quest,” I answered.

[Checking the Legendary-Ranked Quest.]

[Legendary-Ranked Quest - Continental Salvation (0/1)]

I saw everyone looking at their status window.

“I’m a petite bourgeoisie who cares more about your survival than the continent’s survival and that’s the reason why things went wrong earlier. I felt kind of strange to suddenly receive a quest like this,” I continued.

Actually, it wasn’t that strange at all.

“I even thought that maybe someone was watching us. If I had to describe this strange feeling, I think it’s right to say that I felt a sense of responsibility. *Ah*, it’s not because I’m being greedy over the stats that come with the title as a reward. *Haha*,” I chuckled.

When I chuckled, everyone laughed lightly.

Obviously, I didn’t feel a sense of responsibility. I just wanted the reward because

that one-point increase in my magic stat was precious.

“If you think about it, we’re just fixing the issue we created… There’s this urge in me to complete this quest safely and with no casualties,” I added.

For the museum!

“For our future generations who will live in Lindel,” I said.

Jo Hye-Jin, who had an inkling of my true nature, and Dialugia, who had participated in the dirty negotiation earlier, looked as if every word coming out of my mouth was a bunch of bullshit, but the majority of the people here were nodding. Sun Hee-Young and Ahn Ki-Mo especially seemed like they enjoyed the speech. A motivated expedition party with a sense of responsibility would become strong. Fraud was one of the key elements in solving this kind of issue, even though it may not seem that way.

“Let’s get going.”

“We’re leaving.”

Kim Hyun-Sung ordered the party and the expedition party started walking as they nodded. I did feel guilty after looking at Dialugia’s face because she looked at me as if she was dumbfounded until the very last moment, but right now, we were the continent’s chosen guardians.

‘We’ll show you the power of mankind! You dirty Fragment of the Ancient God!’

The real battle had started and from the monster’s point of view, I was sure the fight seemed pretty unfair.

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1. While the saying is ‘it’s the journey, not the destination,’ the raws had it as 어떻게 가도 목적지에 도착하면 상관없다 so we left it as is ☜

CHAPTER 249
MAX, THE MUSEUM MANAGER (5)

The battle to protect the museum; no, the continent had begun. When I waved at the struggling Max, he quickly got up from his seat. It was funny how he became loyal to me in just a few hours, but he had no choice.

'He's desperate.'

I had no idea when it came to other tasks, but I was better than him at this type of task where I had to supplement insufficient mana. One of the reasons why I was better than him was that I could see the part that was getting weaker even before the system could give a warning. It was the same for the dirty Fragment of the Ancient God's pattern. Even though I didn't have detailed information about the monster, I knew its movement pattern. In this situation where there was no time to waste, knowing the weak spot ahead of time was really helpful.

When I spoke as soon as I sat down, I heard Max talking.

"You told them the shortest distance, right? Mr. Max?"

- I did and they're probably going to enter soon!

"Nice," I commented.

- Is there anything else…

"Make me another coffee," I ordered.

- Yes, sir!

As soon as I looked at the mana hologram, I saw the expedition party entering the area where the Fragment of the Ancient God was located.

"Is the voice connected?"I asked.

- Yes, it has already been connected. When you want to talk to one of the warriors that you came with, put your mana into the magic circle located at the far end. Uh…

"You call me Mr. CEO," I replied.

- Okay, Mr. CEO!

He had to have experience because he was quick when it came to getting work done. I guess I was wrong when I assumed he was an idiot, but he was moving in such a hurry that he had overlooked a few things.

- *Ahhh. Ah.* Voice test. Raise your right hand if you can hear my voice, Mr. Hyun-Sung.

The regressor on the screen raised his hand to confirm it, and he looked really reliable wielding the mythic-ranked sword. The others were preparing for battle, and I was certain they were going to do just fine even without me nagging about the small details.

- As I have explained before, it's important that we don't touch the backup program's mana. I would like the others, aside from Ha-Yan, to pour their mana into the backup program. I want Ha-Yan to prepare a big spell and for Dialugia to transform into her original form.

Obviously, there wasn't enough mana to overpower the monster, but the expedition party's mana would still be helpful. After all, the mages were powerful and their magic stats were over 80 points.

- The same applies to the melee group. Slowly pour your mana until I tell you to stop.

I talked calmly as if things were going well, but things weren't actually going *that* well. The more powerful we got, the more resistance the monster showed. In addition, the process of pouring mana into the weak spot while constantly tapping on the magic circle was a complicated process. We gathered mana from all over the place, but it still wasn't enough to completely seal the monster.

After taking a sip of the coffee, I spoke to Max.

"Check if there are any other places we can gather mana from."

- CEO Lee, the situation…

“The situation isn’t that great, but it’s a good thing we sent the expedition party there ahead of time,” I replied.

- *Ah*…

“They’ll do their best to stop it, but it’s likely that one of the seals will break because we still don’t have enough mana,” I added.

- What if we pour the dragon’s mana into it?

“We need to be prepared in case the seal does break. Dialugia is like insurance and the more insurance we have, the better,” I answered.

- I see.

“We may run into an unexpected situation so secure an exit,” I ordered him.

- What?

“Why are you looking at me like that? If something goes wrong, then we have to survive so that we can come back to fix this. You probably don’t know this because you have been hiding in this museum, but the people over there are one of the strongest people among the humans right now. If they can’t fix this, no one can,” I explained.

- *Oh!* I understand.

“Without them, do you really think it would have been possible for us to defeat a legendary-ranked monster so quickly and destroy the seal the Rift Guardians had placed on the monster? Don’t worry so much, Mr. Max. I cherish this museum as well, but it’s unfortunate that I can’t use the items here. You also have to stop nitpicking everything I say because it makes me lose focus,” I warned him.

- Y-Yes, sir!

Max remained quiet because he was shocked, and I was sure he knew better than anyone that this task wasn't easy.

The sound of mana being poured into the program continuously reverberated as I tapped on the magic circle while talking.

- Ha-Yan, maintain the spell you're casting and pour a little bit more mana to the one that's binding the tentacle near Deok-Gu. That one looks like it's about to break.

What annoyed me a bit was that the monster had become a bit more ferocious and was focusing its power on one side. Of course, I had no choice but to focus the mana on the weaker side.

'Shit.'

I wanted to save Jung Ha-Yan and Dialugia's mana in case we had to escape from here, but there was no other choice. I thought it was more advantageous to get things done one by one rather than doing them all at once.

However, getting things done wasn't the only issue.

'My mana is the problem.'

It was going to be a fairly long battle and controlling the panels while pouring my mana into them was a lot of work. Obviously, a spell would consume more mana, but since I thought this battle was going to last a pretty long time, I had to save mana.

That was the reason why I was using Mr. Max watching from the back, and he was doing a pretty good job. However, I was kind of worried that he was going to cause trouble because he looked really excited…

- CEO Lee. Seals 21 and 7 have been completely restored!

"Don't get too excited now. That monster thinks it can break the others as long as it can break one of the seals. I'm starting to see… signs of that…" I said.

- Seal 9 has been restored as well.

"Don't move so hastily. Only pour mana into the place I tell you," I warned him.

- Seal 10, too!

"Recover the remaining mana," I ordered.

- Seal 69!

“You bastard! Who told you to pour it there?!” I yelled.

- *Huh?* 6… 9… Seal 69…

“Hurry and pull Seal 69 up…”

Crack!

One of the large tentacles broke through the seal and the way it stood tall was so ridiculous I was at a loss for words. While Max was pouring mana into Seal 69, the tentacle sprung up as if it was growing. I used the magic circle to shoot a mana chain toward the tentacle, but it wasn’t so easy to restrain it.

‘It might break the others.’

Actually, the other seals would shatter if it jumped around. However, the situation was now out of my hands.

- Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle!

The expedition party was already preparing for battle even before I said anything and even though I couldn’t hear the party, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung yelling and Jung Ha-Yan activating her magic. They already knew that they had to seal this worked-up monster and the good part about all this was that they already knew what to target.

- Just the tentacle… you must attack the tentacle.

Seeing hundreds of tiny magic beams continuously attacking the tentacle was a spectacular sight, and I was sure it was Jung Ha-Yan’s magic. I guess Dialugia thought that Breath was too strong because she jumped into battle, and I had no choice but to invest a little bit more mana into the chains holding the monster down when I saw that.

“Maintain the control room with the minimum amount of mana possible and send the rest over there,” I ordered.

- I-I’m sorr—

“You just need to correct your mistake, Mr. Max,” I interrupted.

- CEO L-Lee.

Seeing the large dragon trying to bite the monster was a sight to see and even though I was watching it through a screen, it was enough to make me jizz my pants. However, I couldn't tell if her attack injured it. I was worried that my wife was going to get herself killed by overdoing it, but luckily, she was fine. However, it had to have been difficult for her to overcome the resisting monster because the tentacle twisted and sent her flying to a wall. When Sun Hee-Young and Ahn Ki-Mo used their holy power on the large dragon that stood up as if nothing had happened, Park Yeon-Joo and the members of the Black Swan Guild pounced at the monster with their swords.

'What the… '

They looked like valkyries attacking a God. Seeing these fearless female warriors would make anyone think that it was such a beautiful sight.

'Shit.'

But I guess the Fragment of the Ancient God didn't think they were beautiful, as the large main tentacle being tied down by the blue mana unleashed smaller tentacles toward them.

'It has a skill like that?'

Some blocked the tentacles with their swords while the others found it dangerous to do so. Fortunately, Park Deok-Gu ran between them and used his shield to block some tentacles, and Jo Hye-Jin swung her spear after jumping off Park Deok-Gu's shoulder.

Drop, drop.

A few tentacles fell to the ground, but Jo Hye-Jin closed her eyes when she saw the tentacles that were still flying her way. But after noticing that she remained uninjured, she looked up and saw Dialugia blocking the tentacles using her tail, and I was sure that she also saw the large amount of mana gathering in Dialugia's mouth.

- Don't use Breath! *Ah!* Use the concentrated one!

The concentrated form of her Breath penetrated the area she bit earlier. One of the backup program's chains holding the monster down broke as it struggled in pain.

And I saw Kim Hyun-Sung attacking the same area while cutting the tentacles attacking him.

'It's up to you… Shit! Hyun-Sung!'

When he swung his sword slowly, it felt like time had stopped and the moment his sword landed on the tentacle, it was cleanly severed.

"*Yeeeeees!!!*" I screamed.

- *Kgggggh!*

"Seal it! Hurry, hurry, hurry! Seal the other side, too! Seal it!" I yelled.

- *Ahhhhh…*

"Stop crying! Move over!"

Obviously, I continued to pour my mana into the panels and when I started tapping on the magic circles, I heard Max's voice.

- The upper half is completely sealed. Seals 32 to 41 are restored! Seal 69 is restored as well. *Gaaah…*

The blue chains wrapping around the monster from different places started tying the monster up like the first time we tried to seal it. Eventually, a large door that would put the monster in deep slumber opened and although the monster struggled, it was no use.

"Disappear! You dirty demon! *Hahahaha!*" I laughed.

At this point, I was so happy that I wanted to dance, and even though it felt like the monster's large eyes were looking toward the management room, it didn't really matter.

"I won't hand over my museum! You bastard! *Haha! Cough! Cough!*"

In the end, the monster got pulled inside and the large door made up of blue mana slowly closed. The mana by the door distorted and in the middle of it, I saw a human-shaped mana crystal.

'What's that?'

It wasn't a threat to us and seeing Max stare at the screen made me think that woman was a Rift Guardian, but it was more like the remaining thoughts of the woman rather than the Rift Guardian herself. I didn't know the backstory, but Max was crying while watching the woman casting a spell. She instantly completed the spell and unknown runes started flying toward the large door. A blue light filled the room again and when the light disappeared, I saw the expedition members hugging each other while sitting on the ground.

"Niceeeeeeee!" I yelled.

[You have completed the Legendary-Ranked Quest.]

[Legendary-Ranked Quest - Continental Salvation (1/1)]

[A title has been created.]

[Title - Continental Guardian]

[All stats have increased by one.]

[The Museum Manager Rank has increased by one. The Rift Museum Rank 5 Manager title has changed to Rift Museum Rank 4 Manager. Due to Rift Guardian Metel's earnest request, a new title has been forcefully created.]

[Max's Guardian]

"*Huh*?"

My happiness only lasted for a moment. When I looked at Max as if I was asking what this meant, he looked strangely surprised.

CHAPTER 250
MAX, THE MUSEUM MANAGER (6)

When I[1] opened my eyes, the first thing I saw was people looking down at me.

“We did it.”

“It’s a success!”

Everything seemed unfamiliar as far as I could remember. It was a large room filled with people: some had pointy ears and the others were short. There were some taller than others, and there were people with green skin as well. When I looked around, a person with pointy ears and blonde hair patted my head with a big smile and their face was the most memorable to me.

“Your name is Max.”

- Max?

“Yeah, Max.”

- Max!

“And my name is Metel.”

- Metel?

“Yeah, Metel.”

- Metel!

“This place is called the Rift Museum. You’re a lump of mana created with the power of the Guardians… How about we walk before I explain everything? Do you think you can walk?” Metel asked.

- *Ah*… yes.

At the time, everything seemed interesting. From the people who greeted me, the people who patted my head, and the objects laying on the floor. I could remember being new to me. The cold sensation when my feet touched the ground, and the feeling of mana when it touched my skin.

'I was relieved—relieved that I'm alive.'

Of course, I felt that way because it felt like everyone was blessing me.

Time passed…

After that day, I learned many things. I learned why I was born, why this Rift Museum existed, and how to control the management room. Studying was fun because I could spend time with the Guardians, and I received compliments whenever I worked hard.

"Do you understand?"

- Yes, Mr. Jaime. I understand. I even memorized the list of items that have to be taken care of!

"Really? Our Max is so smart," he complimented.

- Thank you.

I acquired a lot of knowledge.

"You were born to manage this museum, Max. I do feel bad that you have to take over the duties of the Guardians, but I hope you'll understand."

- There's no need to feel bad, Mr. Oliver. I'm really happy to be born.

I learned what it meant to be responsible.

"By the way, you know that your body will dissolve when you step outside of this museum, right? The mana in this museum is what's maintaining your body, so be careful."

- Okay, Mr. Snef!

I even knew what I shouldn't do.

"I'm happy you're working hard. *Hm*. You and I look similar…"

- I'm honored that you think that way, Mr. Isaac. I heard you're leaving today…

"Yeah, because I'm not from this world. I'm sure we'll meet again and until then, stay safe, Max."

- *Ah…* okay.

There were things I couldn't get used to even after a long time, but walking around the museum, doing maintenance, and talking to the Guardians were fun.

'Thank you for creating me, Guardians.'

I had similar thoughts throughout the day and even though there were some Guardians I felt uncomfortable being around, there were some I was comfortable with.

- Guardian Metel!

"Max! How was it today?" she asked.

- I did maintenance work in the management office and saw a sealed rift with Mr. Snef.

"Oh, dear. Did he say anything? Did he treat you well?" she questioned.

- He did and he explained many things to me. He said that even though the rift is completely sealed right now, it could open up again and we have to always be watching it. And he also explained the objects in this museum…

"I'm sure you're tired of it since he talks about it every time…" she complained.

- It's fine, Miss Metel. It's the reason I was born. I was created to succeed the Guardians and maintain this museum! I need to work hard!

"…"

- Guardian Metel?

“You don’t have to carry so much weight,” Metel commented.

- What?

“It’s nothing. How about skipping class tomorrow and having fun?” she suggested.

- Is that okay?

“Of course. It’s okay to rest for one day,” she replied.

My time with Miss Metel was especially fun. The other Guardians treated me well, but Guardian Metel treated me markedly different from the others.

- Guardian Metel, what are parents?

“Parents are a mother and father. Elves like me and humans like Jaime were born differently than you, Max. When a woman and a man make love, a child is created inside the woman’s stomach and after some time, the child is born into this world. The people who created that baby are called parents. Of course the concept of raising… *Ah!* By the way, why are you asking that?” she asked.

- Mr. Snef said that you were like a parent to me.

“Of course! The method may be a bit different, but I’m basically your parent, Max. I contributed the most to bringing you into this world. *Hehe*. Snef is quick-witted. To be honest, I consider you my child. How about it? Do you want to call me mother?”

- N-No.

“How come?” she asked.

- It’s just… embarrassing.

“Hurry up and call me mother!”

- L-Later. I’m embarrassed.

I was really glad that I was born and when recalling that time, I could remember it

being the happiest moment of my life. I had no worries; I was always smiling, and I would sometimes act like a child around Guardian Metel.

I didn't know how much time had passed, but Mr. Jaime's hair had changed from blue to white and wrinkles appeared on Mr. Oliver and Mr. Snef's faces. The always angry Mr. Snef was spending more time either reading or looking out into the distance, and he looked noticeably weak. Mr. Oliver was now having a hard time chewing, and he would say sorry every time he patted my head.

"I'm sorry."

- It's fine, Mr. Oliver. I should be the one to apologize. There's nothing I can do for you…

"We have put a heavy burden on you," he added.

- I have never thought of it that way, Mr. Oliver!

"*Haha*… I'm thankful that you think that way. Yes… thank you," he said.

- Mr. Oliver? Guardian Metel! Mr. Oliver is acting strange! Guardian Metel!

And for the first time in my life, I experienced the death of another person. This was probably around the time when it happened.

- Humans die.

The time when I experienced a truth I had known for a long time.

"Our cutie…"

Mr. Jaime passed away…

"I'm sorry for treating you so harshly every time. I hope you know that it wasn't because I didn't like you. Max, please take care of the museum."

Mr. Snef died as well. Every time a guardian closed their eyes, Guardian Metel would quietly cry, and the days she wouldn't eat had also become longer.

'Maybe she's unhappy because she was born… '

I always had that thought whenever a guardian passed away, and whenever Guardian Metel locked herself in her room. Now, it was just the two of us in this museum and I was still having the same thought. Of course, she wasn't always unhappy. Guardian Metel didn't age and there were a lot of things to be happy about. We read books and even ran around the museum. We had a lot of conversations and my lessons never stopped, so we spent a lot more time laughing than being sad. It was a bit unfortunate that we couldn't go out, but it was still fun.

I thought this was going to last forever, but Guardian Metel wasn't immortal. Just like Mr. Jaime and the others, she started to change and it was during this time that Guardian Metel stayed in her room more often.

"I'm going to start… researching, Max. It's going to get kind of busy for me," she said.

- Okay, ma'am.

"I may not come out of my room. Until then… I'll leave the museum up to you," she added.

- I understand.

I didn't know what kind of research she was doing, but I barely saw her after that.

- She's unhappy because she was born.

I started having that thought more often. Guardian Metel continued her research and she started deteriorating even faster than before. Whenever she left her room, she would be panting while grabbing her chest, and she started coughing more often. It was scary, but I had no choice but to smile and focus on managing the museum because I had to do my job.

Whenever Guardian Metel was patting my head and casting spells on my body, she would say the same thing.

"I love you."

Liar…

She still said the same thing even when she was having difficulty moving.

“I love you.”

Liar…

Even when her body ran out of mana, she still said the same thing while smiling.

“I love you, Max.”

Liar…

When she led me outside the museum by squeezing the final vestiges of her mana, she still said the same thing.

Even when she mumbled, *“My research was a success,”* or even when her body was trembling, she still said the same thing.

“I love you… I love… you, Max.”

I thought it was all a lie.

- Liar…

“…”

- If you really loved me… then you shouldn’t have created me. *Kgh…*

“…”

- If you really loved me, then you shouldn’t have left me alone like this. If Mr. Jaime, Mr. Oliver, and Mr. Snef liked me, then they shouldn’t have—*kgh*—left me alone. You’re a liar, Miss Metel. *Ugh*… You said we would stay together forever… You’re a liar… If I knew this was going to happen, then it would have been better if I wasn’t born. It would have been better if you didn’t create me.

“…”

- I never said I wanted to go outside. I said I was okay with living inside the museum. I never asked for this. If you said that you loved me… then you should stay with me. You shouldn’t have done this to me.

"…"

-…

"…"

- I… I love you, too! I love you, too! So please don't go.

"…"

- I already knew you weren't lying and that you really loved me. So, please… Wake up. Please wake up…

"…"

- *Kgh*… please… please.

"…"

* * *

"Is that it?" I[2] asked.

- Yes… As I have explained to you. I didn't go outside. I simply took care of the duties the Guardians left for me. I was surprised when the museum suddenly turned into a dungeon.

It was a more touching story than I thought and it was to the point that maybe I should have cried for Max after he told his story so calmly. However, my eyes weren't filled with hot tears. Personally, the story sounded kind of unrealistic, and I couldn't become emotional, as it was too noisy outside. I was certain the expedition party was heading toward the management room.

[Max's Guardian]

[The title was created at Guardian Metel's earnest request. The Museum Manager Rank will increase based on Max's growth status. - I'm sorry. Please be sincere.]

'Wow… '

It wasn't bad. It wasn't like the time with Dialugia where she linked my life with hers, as it was up to me to decide what to do with Max. However, I started to feel uncomfortable. In addition, the thought that the woman named Metel crossed the rainbow bridge after completing the seal made me unable to say anything.

"What we saw just now…"

- It's probably the remaining thoughts she left behind. Maybe, she couldn't trust me until the very end.

"I don't think so. She probably left it just in case you left the museum," I said.

- *Ah…*

"Anyway… that Rift Guardian just now wanted me to look after you. Actually, why didn't you leave the museum that day?" I asked.

- S-Someone has to take care of this place. I'm the manager… I-I'm sorry.

"No need to apologize, Mr. Max. It's not like it's going to affect me negatively. However, I'm not sure how I should explain this," I mentioned.

Max started biting his nails like Jung Ha-Yan as if he was anxious about something. In the meantime, I had to think about what to do with him.

'It's not that bad of a benefit.'

I had already received a huge profit when the Museum Manger Rank increased. It was hard to organize everything right now because I had acquired so many things, but no matter how hard I thought about it, the biggest reward during this expedition was this museum.

'I do need someone to take care of it… '

Now that I had become his guardian, I would probably have to come up with a different method, but Max was indispensable because aside from me, he was the only one who knew how to use these controls. In addition, I would save a lot of time learning how these panels worked.

"Mr. Max," I called out.

- Yes?

“Regarding… the internal layout of these panels…”

- I… have an idea. Of course, I can’t touch the core devices…

“How about this? And this?” I asked.

- *Ah*… that much I can…

“*Oh ho*… Is there anything else you can do?” I asked.

- *Oh*… I think I can make that too, CEO Lee.

“*Oh?*”

- CEO Lee?

The answer was already there, so I didn’t need to think too deeply about it.

“Don’t call me CEO Lee anymore… You can call me father, son,” I told him.

- What?

“*Hahaha*.”

I now had a son who would be responsible for my happy days as an old man.

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1. Max’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

PDF by: traitorAIZEN